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Seventy-third year

Provisional

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Friday, 5 January 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Umarov	(Kazakhstan)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Ms. Schoulgin Nyoni
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Expression of welcome to new members and of thanks to outgoing members of the Security Council

The President: As this is the first formal meeting of the Security Council this year, I should like to extend my warm wishes on the occasion of the New Year to all members of the Security Council, the United Nations and the Secretariat.

In presiding over this first formal meeting of the Council in 2018, I am happy to welcome the new members Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru and Poland. We look forward to their participation in the work of the Council. Their experience and wisdom will be of invaluable assistance in the discharge of the Council's responsibilities.

I also take this opportunity to express the Council's gratitude to the outgoing members — Egypt, Italy, Japan, Senegal, Ukraine and Uruguay — for their important contributions to the work of the Council during their terms.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President: I should also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Ambassador Koro Bessho, Permanent Representative of Japan, for his service as President of the Council for the month of December 2017. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Bessho and his team for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Zerihoun.

Mr. Zerihoun: As requested, I would like to brief the Security Council on ongoing developments in the Islamic Republic of Iran, under the agenda item "The situation in the Middle East".

As this is the first public meeting of the Security Council in 2018, I would like, on behalf of the Department of Political Affairs, to congratulate the six new elected members of the Council on their assumption of their important responsibilities. I also wish the Security Council a successful year.

The protests in the Islamic Republic of Iran started on 28 December 2017, when hundreds of Iranians gathered, in a largely peaceful manner, in Mashhad, the country's second-largest city, chanting slogans against economic hardships. Over the following days, protests occurred in other urban centres, including Tehran, as well as in many rural areas. Some of the slogans also expressed disappointment at slow or limited change in social strictures and political freedoms, and criticized what the demonstrators decried as the privileged position of the clergy and elements of the country's security establishment. In other cases, demonstrators demanded that Iran cease its costly involvements in the region.

As the protests escalated, some turned violent. Videos posted on social media platforms, several of which remain largely blocked by the Government, and footage broadcast by State television channels showed the beating of protesters and the burning of government offices, banks and religious centres. According to reports carried by official Iranian media, more than 20 Iranians, including a teenage boy and a policeman, have died during the protests. Iran's Ministry of the Interior stated that over 1,000 protesters had been detained, although many may have since been released.

With very limited presence on the ground, the Secretariat cannot confirm or deny the authenticity of the images that have been broadcast or the extent of the violence. However, we have received reports that the police, rather than military forces, were responding to the protests.

On 3 January, Iran's Revolutionary Guards announced the end of the anti-Government protests. Recent reports indicate smaller and scattered

demonstrations. Meanwhile, from 3 to 5 January, large pro-Government rallies were reportedly held across the country, with participants expressing support for the Supreme Leader and condemning violence.

On 31 December 2017, President Rouhani told a Cabinet meeting that the Iranian people should be allowed space to protest and criticize the Government. At the same time, he stressed that violence would not be tolerated. Two days later, on 2 January, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei accused Iran's enemies, without naming them, of stirring the unrest. On 3 January, the Permanent Representative of Iran to the United Nations wrote to the Secretary-General, accusing the United States of stepping up

> "its acts of intervention in a grotesque way in Iran's internal affairs under the pretext of providing support for sporadic protests [in Iran]".

The outbreak of violent protests in Iran has focused attention on events in the country. A number of world leaders have expressed support for the Iranian protesters. Others, including the European Union, have called on the Iranian authorities to respect the right to peaceful demonstration and freedom of opinion. Yet more have supported the Government of Iran in calling the protests an internal matter.

On 3 January, the Secretary-General issued a statement deploring the loss of life in the protests and urging respect for the rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression and that demonstrations take place in a peaceful manner The same day, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights called on the Iranian authorities

> "to handle the wave of protests that have taken place around the country with great care so as not to further inflame violence and unrest"

and to investigate all deaths and serious injuries that have occurred so far. On 5 January, four United Nations Special Rapporteurs stated that

> "[t]he Iranian authorities should take immediate action to ensure that all citizens can exercise peacefully the right to freedom of expression and assembly, and should ensure that these and other fundamental rights are not met with violence".

As of today, United Nations development work in the Islamic Republic of Iran has not been significantly affected by the recent events. The Secretariat will continue to monitor developments on the ground and engage Iranian authorities with a view to contributing to efforts that address, as the Secretary-General underscored in his statement of 3 January, the legitimate concerns of the population through peaceful means and help to avoid violence or retribution against peaceful protestors.

The President: I thank Mr. Zerihoun for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): I wish a happy new year to all of the members of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

In the past week, what has happened on the ground throughout the nation of Iran is something the world must take note of. It is a spontaneous expression of fundamental human rights. The Iranian people are rising up in over 79 locations throughout the country. It is a powerful exhibition by brave people who have become so fed up with their oppressive Government that they are willing to risk their lives in protest. The world should applaud their courage. The voices of the Iranian people should be heard.

We have debated the proper role of human rights in the Security Council. Some of our colleagues believe that the subject has no place here. They believe that human rights and fundamental freedoms are the business solely of the Governments that control them. The United States does not share that belief. Human rights are not the gift of Governments. They are the inalienable rights of the people themselves. Freedom and human dignity cannot be separated from peace and security. When the rights of the people are denied, the people rightly resist. If their concerns are not acknowledged, peace and security are inevitably threatened. We have seen that repeatedly throughout human history. The case of Syria is a horrible recent testament to that fact. And what is happening in towns and cities across Iran right now bears out that fundamental truth.

The Iranian regime's contempt for the rights of its people has been widely documented for many years. The people of Iran have finally had enough, and they are showing it by taking to the streets. The Iranian people understand the nature of their regime. They understand that their lack of voice in their Government has allowed the regime to ignore them, and to spread conflict and instability far and wide. If we listen to the slogans they

chant in the street, that understanding comes through loud and clear. The United Nations reports that the Iranian regime spends at least $6 billion every year propping up the murderous Al-Assad regime in Syria. The people of Iran know that, and they are therefore telling the Government, "Let go of Syria. Think of us."

The Iranian regime spends millions on militias in Iraq every year. Every year it gives millions more to the Houthi rebels in Yemen, including by sending them ballistic missiles to fire at other countries. Meanwhile, the average Iranian family is 15 per cent poorer today than it was 10 years ago, so the Iranian people are demanding, "Think of us." The regime gives low-interest loans to the elite and well connected. It rewards construction contracts to corrupt firms affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. It constructs buildings that skimp on safety. Thousands of those buildings collapsed during an earthquake in which hundreds of people died. And the Iranian people chant, "Think of us." Today, the people of Iran are speaking to their Government, and their message is undeniable. "Stop the support for terrorism. Stop giving billions of our money to killers and dictators. Stop taking our wealth and spending it on foreign fighters and proxy wars. Think of us."

Freedom-loving nations worldwide have spread support for the cause of the Iranian people — Canada, Norway, the United Kingdom, Israel, France, Sweden and other countries of the European Union. We honour and appreciate all of their statements of support for universal human rights. But we must do more. The Iranian regime is cutting off Internet access in an attempt to shut down communication among the protesters. They are attempting to silence the voice of the Iranian people. We cannot allow that to happen. Every State Member of the United Nations is sovereign, but Member States cannot use sovereignty as a shield when they categorically deny their people human rights and fundamental freedoms.

I call on all of my colleagues to join me in amplifying the Iranian people's message. And I call on the Government of Iran to stop censoring the voice of the people and to restore their access to the Internet, because, in the end, the Iranian people will determine their own destiny. Let there be no doubt whatever that the United States stands unapologetically with those in Iran who seek freedom for themselves, prosperity for their families and dignity for their nation. We will not be quiet. No dishonest attempt to call the protesters puppets of foreign Powers will change that. The Iranian people know the truth, and so do we. They are acting of their own will, on their own behalf, for their own future. Nothing will stop Americans from standing in solidarity with them.

In 2009, the world stood by passively while the hopes of the Iranian people were crushed by their Government. In 2018, we will not be silent. Once again, the people of Iran are rising up. They are asking for something that no Government can legitimately deny them — their human rights and fundamental freedoms. They are calling out, "Think of us." If the founding principles of this institution mean anything, we will not only hear their cry; we will finally answer it. The Iranian regime is now on notice. The world will be watching what it does.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun for his detailed information on the recent events in Iran. We are following the situation on the ground attentively, and on behalf of France I have two main points to make today.

First, we are meeting this afternoon on the subject of the Middle East, more specifically the question of Iran. We all know that there are items on the Security Council's agenda that enable us to tackle and treat the various dossiers related to international peace and security in the region, whether their subject is the implementation of resolution 2231 (2015) or whether it is Lebanon, Syria, Yemen or Iraq. In that regard, our role and responsibility is to be fully engaged in working to find solutions to the challenges and crises of the Middle East. It is in that spirit that it is essential to ensure that we can maintain the nuclear agreement with Iran, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and enable it to be fully implemented. That approach obtained consensus at the Council's meeting on 19 December (see S/PV.8143). The agreement commits all of us, and the challenge we face is in implementing it rigorously. The nuclear agreement is a cornerstone of the stability of the entire region. The reverse side of that coin is that its loss would represent a serious step backwards, with potentially dire consequences, not just for the region but for the international community and the nuclear-non-proliferation regime.

We must also be sure to maintain a demanding and realistic dialogue with Iran on containing and limiting its ballistic activity in order to ensure that it does not

become a destabilizing factor in the region. Besides that, we must continue to conduct close exchanges with Iran to enable us to confront Tehran frankly about the concerns created by its influence in the Middle East and its role in regional crises, particularly through its actions in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen. In all of those countries we must find ways and means to respond to external attempts to assert hegemony, which can lead only to the failure of every effort to stabilize the situation. That is the only way to make progress towards peace and towards inclusive political solutions to the conflicts that have roiled the Middle East in recent years. Despite our sometimes serious differences, which we acknowledge, all of us need that dialogue. France remains more than ever committed to that, while continuing to be watchful, clear-thinking and candid.

The second point I want to make is about the issue that has led the Council to meet today. I would like to voice our concerns about the violence that has followed the demonstrations in Iran in the past few days and about the numerous victims and arrests that have resulted among the protesters. We call on the Iranian authorities to show restraint and calm and to respect fundamental freedoms, including freedom of conscience, expression and communication and the right to peaceful protest. Iranians must be able to demonstrate peacefully and have their views heard. We must remain vigilant in order to ensure that those rights and freedoms are not flouted, as President Macron of France told his Iranian counterpart, President Rouhani, when they spoke on 2 January.

It is up to the Iranians and the Iranians alone to pursue the path of peaceful dialogue, a dialogue that is based on full respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Iranian people. However worrying the events of the past two days in Iran may be, they do not constitute per se a threat to international peace and security. We must react appropriately, in other words, be vigilant as to the threat of violence against peaceful protesters, but be wary of any attempt to exploit this crisis, which would only strengthen extremists and have an outcome diametrically opposed to the one desired.

To conclude, let me say that change in Iran will not come from without; it will come from the Iranian people themselves.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First and foremost, given that this is the first open meeting of the Security Council, I should like, on behalf of the delegation of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, to once again congratulate the Kazakhstan delegation on assuming the presidency of the Council for this month and to assure it of our support.

The Bolivian delegation believes that the holding of this meeting is not a welcome initiative, because, as has been the case in the past, we are witnessing a blatant attempt by some Missions to bring to the attention of the Security Council issues that do not fall within the purview of this body. We categorically reject the undisguised attempts by some delegations to push for meetings on issues that do not pose a threat to international peace and security, which in the long term risks the Security Council being instrumentalized for political ends.

It must be crystal-clear to the international community that the situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran is not an issue that belongs on the agenda of the Security Council, and we are concerned at attempts to force its inclusion in the Security Council agenda as part of the broader Middle East agenda item.

The position of the Plurinational State of Bolivia was made abundantly clear by President Evo Morales, who condemned in the strongest possible terms any threat to intervene or interfere in internal affairs of the people and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We are convinced that, as history has proved time and again, unilateral action and policies of interventionism and regime change can only ever lead to devastating humanitarian, social and economic consequences, the repercussions of which we are still seeing today, in some cases in the context of issues that are before the Security Council.

On this occasion, we would echo the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, which has time and again reiterated its commitment to respecting the sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity of States; upholding the sovereign equality of States and the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of States; the peaceful solution of disputes; and abstaining from the use or threat of use of force.

Finally, Bolivia is convinced that any internal conflict of any State around the world must be resolved in the framework of that country's own practices and in line with its own sovereign principles, without any external interference.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is a great pleasure for me, as I am speaking for the first time in the Security Council, to wish you, Mr. President, and all members a happy New Year and to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of January. I wish you every success.

I would also like to congratulate the newly elected members of the Council and wish them every success in the two years ahead.

Forty years after our first term on the Council, I take this opportunity to reiterate that we look forward to working together and cooperating with members on all issues on the agenda of the Council. The State of Kuwait will work unremittingly during its term on the Council, in compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, hoping that our efforts will succeed in achieving the aspirations of our peoples and the whole world.

We listened carefully to the statement made by Assistant Secretary-General Taye-Brook Zerihoun and welcome the information provided to us, as well as his efforts and those of all staff of the Department of Political Affairs. We take note of the letter dated 3 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Iran addressed to the Secretary-General, as well as the press statement issued yesterday by the spokesperson for the Secretary-General, in which he expressed the Secretary-General's concern regarding the recent events in Iran and his deploration of the loss of life due to the demonstrations in Iran.

Regrettably, we have been following what has been reported and statements citing the Iranian the authorities regarding the loss of life among civilians and members of the security forces, as well as the various acts of violence that have occurred over the past few days. In that context, we stress that it is important to respect the freedom of expression and rights of peaceful demonstrators, in accordance with the Iranian Constitution and international law, including the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights, adopted by the General Assembly in 1966 (resolution 2200A (XXI)), which guarantees freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, among other things.

The State of Kuwait deems it important to engage in preventive diplomacy and strengthen the role of the Security Council in the prevention of conflicts and addressing events at an early stage, when there are signs of future threats to regional and international peace and security. We hope that the popular demonstrations in Iran do not take that direction. In that regard, we would like to stress that, when dealing with such events, it is essential to abide by established principles regulating relations among States, based on the Charter of the United Nations, that is, respect for the sovereignty of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and compliance with the remit of the various bodies of the United Nations. The Council, according to Article 24 of the Charter, is the organ charged with maintaining international peace and security and with addressing any genuine threat to global security and stability.

Over the past few years, several States in the Middle East have witnessed demonstrations and protests that were peaceful at first but, regrettably, turned violent, leading to loss of life, damage to infrastructure, foreign interference and instability in the region. Some of these events had disastrous results that the international community is still dealing with and suffering from. We hope that this will not happen in Iran or in any other State.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is our neighbour, with which we have long-standing historical relations. We are keen to maintain friendly and stable relations with it based on good-neighbourliness, mutual respect, common interests and non-interference. We have stated this in the framework of the Gulf Cooperation Council and of various Arab and Islamic bodies, whose concerns we convey to the Council. The stability and security of Iran is closely linked to that of the region and of the world as a whole. We hope that the situation in Iran does not evolve into further violence. We call for necessary measures to be taken and restraint to be shown in dealing with the demonstrators, so that there are no further victims. Their demands must be heard and dealt with wisely so as to improve their living conditions and prevent tensions from escalating and to ward off instability.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank you, Mr. President, and welcome you to the hot seat.

I would also like to thank our briefer, Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun, for the updates on the situation in Iran and to extend a very warm welcome to all the new members of the Security Council. We look forward to working closely with all six of them to enhance international peace and security.

The United Kingdom is watching events in Iran very closely. We regret the loss of life that has occurred

during the protests. We call for an end to the violence and for the Government of Iran to comply with its international human rights obligations in dealing with the protests. There needs to be a meaningful debate about the legitimate and important issues that the protesters are raising. I note here that President Rouhani has said that the protesters' concerns are legitimate and that they have a right to peaceful protest. People should be able to exercise their right to freedom of expression and demonstrate peacefully and lawfully. We encourage the Iranian authorities to permit such actions.

No one is forcing Iran onto our agenda. The Security Council is perfectly empowered, through Article 34 of the Charter of the United Nations to

> "investigate any dispute, or any situation which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute, in order to determine whether the continuance of the dispute or situation is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security".

The United Kingdom's concerns about the human rights situation in Iran extend beyond the recent treatment of protesters. The continued use of the death penalty, including for juveniles, the weak rule of law, and restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of religion and belief are all deeply worrying. We call on Iran to adhere to its international obligations and to respect the rights of individuals to freedom of expression, opinion and peaceful assembly. We also urge Iran to permit full access to the Special Rapporteur so that she can fully assess its actions on areas of concern.

At the same time,it is important to recognize that Iran has legitimate security interests in the region. Iran suffered hugely in the Iran-Iraq war. We worked with Iran after 9/11. The Iranian people represent an ancient and important civilization that has a rightful place in the modern world, with a modern economy. But too often, Iran's security interests are pursued in a way that destabilizes and, at times, directly threatens others, supports terrorism and distorts the Iranian economy. These regional activities risk increasing international conflict and threaten international peace and security.

We are deeply concerned by Iranian assistance to groups in Yemen, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. That includes reported transfers of Iranian ballistic missile parts and related technology to the Houthis in Yemen. Such transfers violate resolution 2231 (2015), which prohibits such transfers without the authorization of the Security Council. They also violate resolution 2216 (2015), which prohibits the sale or transfer of arms and related materiel to the Houthis. Houthi missile attacks in November and December targeted civilian areas. Had they landed as intended, they would have caused suffering and chaos. And there are press reports even today of a new launch. This is unacceptable. We call on all Member States to implement Council resolutions and prevent such attacks, which increase regional tensions and threaten peace and security.

The transfer of weapons to the Houthis will also prolong the conflict in Yemen and the suffering of the Yemeni people. As I have said previously, it is essential that the United Nations conduct a thorough investigation and inform the Security Council of its conclusions as soon as possible. We strongly support the Secretary-General's call for a joint meeting of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014) and the Council in the 2231 format. We look forward also to the report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014) this month.

The United Kingdom remains fully committed to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. It is one of the international community's greatest successes in recent memory. We welcome Iran's compliance with its nuclear commitments. We encourage all Member States to uphold their commitments so the Iranian people see the tangible benefits of this deal.

We also encourage Iran to uphold its commitments, especially with respect to the provisions of annex B, as highlighted in the Secretary General's fourth report (S/2017/1030) as stipulated by resolution 2231 (2015). Iran continues to invest heavily in ballistic missile development despite United Nations sanctions; we saw launches of ballistic missiles in 2016 and 2017 that were inconsistent with the resolution. We urge Iran to refrain from such activity and ask all partners to report any evidence that Iran is conducting activity inconsistent with resolution 2231 (2015) to the Security Council.

In conclusion, let us not forget that a prosperous, stable Iran is beneficial us all, in the region and beyond. We will continue to encourage Iran to comply fully with Security Council resolutions, to respect their citizens' human rights, and to reduce regional tensions. That is the only way to achieve the peace and stability we all endeavour to achieve.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is our first statement since we became a

non-permanent member of the Security Council, we would like to thank the presidency of Kazakhstan for its work in January.

As this is the fifth time that we return to the Security Council, I would like to begin by remembering Ambassador Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, who represented Peru in this organ in 1973 and 1974. At that time, he pointed out that the Peruvian delegation would utilize its experience at the United Nations and fulfil its mandate by carefully and intensely considering the problems facing the Organization with a view to contributing thoughtfully and dispassionately to resolving them. He said that he intended to follow in the spirit and the letter of the Charter of the United Nations. Peru reaffirms Ambassador De Cuéllar's remarks.

Peru welcomes the briefing by Assistant Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun and thanks him for the information he provided on the situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In that connection, we regret the loss of human life, we note that the freedom of expression and association are inalienable rights, and we stress that the Iranian authorities have the responsibility to protect all people and guarantee the peaceful exercise of their fundamental rights and freedoms. In the context of international peace and security, we wish to take this opportunity to share three points.

First, we believe that the Security Council, the organ with primary responsibility in the maintenance of international peace and security, should always have the ability to contribute to conflict prevention, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. The situation in Iran, a country of particular importance for Middle East stability, could certainly escalate. Similar situations in recent times in other countries in the region have had serious consequences.

Secondly, Peru is convinced that in order to be credible, coherent and effective, the Council's action should reflect the unanimous commitment of its members, based on a rigorous, objective and dispassionate analysis of the facts. The Council showed that unity and rigour when it addressed the Iranian nuclear issue. Its consistent action, including the imposition of sanctions, was key to reaching the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. My country believes that the implementation of that agreement, as endorsed and monitored by the Council, is today essential to the preservation of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. That is reflected in its inclusion as a specific item on the agenda. Peru prioritizes the preservation of the non-proliferation regime and highlights the need for the Council to remain united when considering issues relating to Iran. In that regard, we note the importance of strengthening multilateralism, cooperation and international law in order to address the serious challenges faced by the international community.

Thirdly, we note that the situation in Iran also reflects the need to tackle the root causes of long-standing regional conflicts, which demonstrate the link between international peace and security and human rights and development. That would require, among other things, full respect for international law and for fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as the promotion of confidence-building measures, dialogue and negotiation. It would also require the participation of women and young people in relevant national processes, disarmament and investment in sustainable development, the prevention of natural disasters, urgent attention to humanitarian crises, and, of course, political support and the cooperation of the international community.

Ms. Schoulgin Nyoni (Sweden): Allow me to start by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency and welcoming the new members of the Council. I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun for his briefing.

We have closely followed recent developments in Iran. We condemn the excessive use of violence and the deplorable loss of lives. The Security Council has an essential preventive function and we should constantly consider means to follow up on early warnings in the most suitable and constructive manner, no matter what country is affected or which situation is involved. We do, however, have our reservations about the format and timing of this meeting.

For Sweden and the European Union, human rights have always been a core issue in our relations with Iran. Sweden unequivocally supports respect for democracy, human rights and the rule of law everywhere around the world. The human right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression must be respected. This must be the case in Iran as in any other country. The grievances aired in the protests should be listened to and the issues raised ought to be resolved through dialogue, as part of a democratic process.

We have noted President Rouhani's reaffirmation of the people's right to protest peacefully. We expect

the Iranian authorities to respond to protests in full compliance with Iran's obligations under international human rights law. In this regard, continued and close dialogue with Iran is of utmost importance. Sweden has been in contact with the Iranian authorities on recent developments. In the spirit of frankness and respect, we have made clear that we expect all concerned to refrain from the excessive and disproportionate use of force and to ensure and respect freedom of expression, including on the Internet.

Human rights violations in Iran must be separated from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Sweden and the European Union are very clear on their full support for the agreement. Its continued implementation is of crucial importance. The agreement is ensuring the exclusively peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme, which contributes to stability in the region and beyond. It significantly contributes to strengthening the global non-proliferation architecture.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): Let me first congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming your role as President of the Council. I will therefore try to say in the Kazakh language, "Thank you, Mr. President".

This is the first time the Kingdom of the Netherlands takes the floor as a member of the Security Council for the year 2018. Let me therefore start by thanking my colleague, Mr. Sebastiano Cardi, and his Deputy Permanent Representative Mr. Inigo Lambertini and their team for the excellent work done in 2017 by Italy, in the context of our split term 2017-2018 on the Council. Let me also thank Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun for his briefing. Given the value we attach to dialogue, we welcome the presence of Iran in this session today.

In my intervention, I will address three issues: the current situation in Iran, human rights and prevention. Let me start with my first point, the current situation in Iran.

As the Assistant Secretary-General just mentioned, the anti-Government protests in Iran, which originated in Mashhad, spread to dozens of Iranian cities and rural areas. These were legitimate and peaceful protests by the Iranian people against the social and economic conditions they face in their daily lives. We have witnessed a disturbing level of violence and a death toll that has risen to more than 20, with many more wounded and arrested. As the Assistant Secretary-General just indicated, the situation in Iran seems to be calming down.

We hope that the situation in Iran will further stabilize, especially when it comes to the use of violence. We therefore call on all sides to refrain from any more violence. We furthermore call upon the Iranian Government to launch a comprehensive accountability process. This accountability process should address all cases of serious human rights violations, including those involving the Iranian judiciary and security agencies. An end to impunity for such human rights violations is paramount.

This brings me to my second point, which concerns respect for human rights. The right to peaceful demonstration and the right to freedom of expression and assembly are fundamental rights. They apply to all persons, in all countries, and Iran is no exception. This was also stressed by the European Union and its member States in our recent statement of 2 January.

In this light, we appreciate the public statements of the Iranian president regarding the legitimacy of peaceful protest in the country, and we take note of the increased willingness for engagement by the Iranian authorities on issues related to human rights. However, we have seen that the Islamic Republic of Iran imposed both offline and online restrictions on the right to freedom of expression, opinion, association and peaceful assembly. The Kingdom of the Netherlands urges the Islamic Republic of Iran to end these restrictions, both offline and online.

My third point is about prevention. Without human rights and fundamental freedoms, there can be no human dignity. Without human dignity, there can be no lasting stability or security. Therefore, from the perspective of conflict prevention, the Council has a responsibility to act early and decisively when fundamental freedoms are under threat. Every person has the right to individual freedoms, such as the freedom of religion, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, and every person has electoral rights and a right to a fair trial. These are not just words; they are obligations under international law. All Governments have a responsibility to honour those obligations.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of the Netherlands reiterates its concern about the recent developments in Iran. We hope that today's session can work as a preventive measure to avoid further escalation of violence. We call upon the Government of the

Islamic Republic of Iran to exercise restraint when reacting to people exercising their human rights, to lift restrictions on fundamental freedoms and to uphold the rule of law by holding perpetrators of human rights violations accountable.

Dialogue is crucial in this context — dialogue within Iran to address existing grievances, but also dialogue between Iran and the broader international community. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is committed to play its role in such a dialogue, especially during our year on the Council.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, for assuming the presidency. Poland is ready to support you, but we are also very privileged to join the Security Council with new elected members and ready for close cooperation. I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun for a very useful presentation.

Poland has been following recent developments in Iran with great attention. We are deeply concerned about the tragic loss of human lives. All sides should unconditionally avoid violence and exercise maximum restraint. We also wish to emphasize that basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as the right to peaceful assembly and demonstrations and the freedom of opinion and expression, must be protected and respected in line with international human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which the Islamic Republic of Iran is a party to.

Iran has a dynamic society with a young vibrant component that wants to be heard. Based on our historic experience, Poland encourages all sides — and only Iranians can do this — to engage in a peaceful dialogue as that is the best way to address the challenges faced by the Iranian society.

Poland would also like to take this opportunity to express its concerns about the growing tensions in the region. Iran has the potential to play a constructive role and contribute to regional stability and security. Therefore, we invite the Iranian authorities and the other countries in the region to work towards a de-escalation of tensions and avoid actions that may contribute to violence, sectarianism or polarization.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): As I speak for the first time in the Security Council Chamber, I would like to wish everyone a happy new year. I would also like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of January.

With your permission, Mr. President, I would like to salute and thank the countries leaving the Council, particularly those from the African continent, for the support they have given us in preparing for our membership in the Council.

My delegation would like to thank you, Sir, for convening today's meeting. We would also like to thank Mr. Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing on the situation in Iran. My delegation takes note of his briefing, which brings us up to date on the latest developments in the socio-political situation in the country. Based on the latest information in its possession, it welcomes the gradual return to normalcy on the ground and hopes that this trend will continue in the best interests of the Iranian people. In keeping with its policy of dialogue in a crisis situation, my country, Côte d' Ivoire, calls upon the parties, in particular the Government and the demonstrators, to continue to pursue dialogue with a view to finding a peaceful resolution of the problems underlying the present situation.

In conclusion, my delegation hopes that earnest initiatives will be taken by the Iranian authorities to bring calm and serenity back to the Iranian people, so that they can pursue together the necessary economic reforms that will lead to the country's development.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to congratulate all the members of the Security Council at the start of the new year 2018, with the hope that it will bring us good health, prosperity and success in our endeavours. In particular, we congratulate Kazakhstan, through Ambassador Umarov, on assuming the presidency of the Council for this January and for the dynamic way in which he has set out to take up the work of the Council.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is very honoured to be seated for the first time in the Security Council Chamber, and I would like to sincerely thank all the States Members of the United Nations for the trust they have shown in our country. In particular, we would like to express our gratitude to all the members of the Security Council, both the current members and those who have just left the Council — namely, Japan, Senegal, Egypt, Ukraine, Italy and Uruguay — for the valuable support they have given us over the past

few months. I extend this expression of gratitude to all the members of the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, and in particular those responsible for Security Council affairs, for all the support that has been extended to us.

The situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is before us today, is due to the demonstrations that have taken place in several cities of the country. The Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea recognizes the right of citizens to demonstrate, as has been recognized by the Iranian judiciary. The demonstrations must be peaceful expressions of the people and must be regulated by law in terms of how they are convened, how they unfold and how they are brought to a conclusion, while also respecting the rights of people who do not support them.

Although the human rights situation in Iran is on the agenda of the Security Council, it does not in principle constitute a threat to international peace and security. Human rights issues must be addressed and discussed in the competent forums set up by the United Nations for that purpose, namely, the Human Rights Council and the Third Committee of the General Assembly, and they have been, and continue to be, taken up in those bodies, and always with due respect for the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States, as set forth in the United Nations Charter.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is convinced that any dispute must be resolved through an ongoing search for a peaceful solution through consultation and dialogue, always in conformity with the principles of international law and in accordance with absolute respect for human rights. Equatorial Guinea therefore believes that frank and inclusive dialogue is the only way to resolve the situation in Iran and that, in that regard, the Iranians themselves must be able to find solutions to their problems as brothers by making use of their legitimate democratically elected institutions, with scrupulous respect for the rule of law.

Finally, we are grateful for the briefing by Mr. Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, who has given us updated information on how the situation of the demonstrations in the Islamic Republic of Iran is evolving, and we are happy to hear that those demonstrations are calming down. We therefore express the desire for a way for intra-Iranian dialogue to be opened up to internally resolve the current situation in the country.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): At the outset, I wish to say how pleased I am to see you, Sir, assume the responsibility of the Security Council presidency. I know we can count on your wisdom.

I should also like to welcome the new members of the Council and to assure them of our readiness to work with them closely, as we did with those colleagues who just left us upon completion of their terms. We applaud the contributions they made.

I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun for his very factual briefing on the matter before us today. We have also taken note of what the Secretary-General said in his statement released two days ago. I would like to refer, in all humility, to a few points in connection with the latest developments in Iran.

First, we have no reason to contest the argument that raising human rights issues has no relevance here. What we have doubts about is whether the Security Council is the proper forum for such discussion. The debate on this matter has yet to be settled. What we find a little troubling is that this may not enhance the possibility of achieving unity in the Council at a time when such unity is so critical. We do not say this without meaning it: we attach great importance to the issue.

We are undoubtedly at a very difficult and complex period in world history, when there are so many issues that call for greater cooperation among nations, particularly among members of the Council. The Middle East is an area where there is a great need to take advantage of whatever opportunities we have for diplomacy to work. All countries have a responsibility to contribute to the realization of this objective. Iran also has a great responsibility in this regard, as do others, including ourselves in our own region.

While we do not want to sound self-righteous, we seriously believe that everything should be done to ensure that Iran contributes to regional peace and stability. That is very critical for the developing world and Africa, where there is great hope for the right global context to realize the 2030 Agenda and the promise made in 2015 to eradicate extreme poverty. Peace on the Korean peninsula would contribute to that as would peace in the Middle East — to which Iran should, and could, contribute. No doubt the concerns that people may have in this regard need to be addressed as frankly as possible, while noting that, at all times, adherence to

the principles of international law governing relations among States is imperative.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate, lest I sound self-righteous, why as a country we attach great importance to these principles: we do so because of what befell us as the only country to be abandoned by the League of Nations when those principles were blatantly abused to our detriment.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, China congratulates Kazakhstan on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and welcomes the new members of the Security Council.

I thank Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun for his briefing.

The topic on today's agenda is the situation of the Middle East. I wish to express China's principled position on this item. Recent developments in certain parts of the Middle East are worrying. Some countries are going through wars and conflicts; hotspot issues are complicated, intertwined and influence one another; terrorist forces are rampant and spreading — all of which pose serious challenges to international peace and security. China hopes that countries of the region will work concertedly with the international community to improve the situation in the Middle East as quickly as possible and seek a fundamental solution to achieve regional peace, stability and development.

First, we call for a political solution to the hotspot issues in the region. All sides should play constructive roles and persistently promote dialogue and consultation to reach a sustainable solution that takes into account the interests of all parties.

Secondly, we should resolutely combat terrorism, while applying uniform standards and employing all means possible to eliminate the root causes that breed terrorism.

Thirdly, the purpose and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and other basic rules governing international relations should be respected, and the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries of the region should be respected.

Fourthly, the countries of the region should be encouraged to strengthen dialogue, deepen understanding and build trust.

The question of Palestine is at the core of the situation in the Middle East. The international community should adhere to the two-State solution, work to restart the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue as swiftly as possible. The international community should continue to seek a political solution to the situation in Syria as a matter of priority, continue to count on the United Nations as the main channel for mediation and work towards the comprehensive, just and careful resolution of the situation in Syrian as soon as possible.

Pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations, the Council bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Security Council, therefore, should not discuss the internal affairs of any country, nor is it the venue for any discussion of the human rights situation in a country.

China takes note of the recent domestic developments in Iran. China hopes and trusts that, with the efforts of the Iranian Government and its people, Iran will remain stable and achieve development. The Iranian situation does not pose any threat to international peace or security, nor is it on the agenda of the Security Council. The Council's discussion of the domestic situation of Iran is a practice that is not in line with the Council's responsibilities as outlined in the Charter of the United Nations, nor does it help resolve the domestic issues within Iran.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I had wanted to congratulate you, Mr. President, on beginning your duties on 9 January, at our first regular Security Council meeting of the new year, but the United States delegation has left me no choice but to do it today. That also applies to the Council's new members, whom I am glad to see in the Chamber. I hope our collaboration will be close and productive. I would also like to thank those of my colleagues who have just left the Council whom I also see here today.

Today, unfortunately, we are once again witnesses to the misuse of the forum of the Security Council by the United States. Why is the United States, a permanent member of the Security Council and one of the authors of the Charter of the United Nations, undermining the authority of the Council as the principal organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security? After all, it is obvious to anyone that

the subject of today's meeting does not correspond to the Council's prerogatives under the Charter. And the references made today to Article 34 of the Charter with regard to the situation are completely inappropriate. That should be obvious to anyone reading Article 34 again.

We have repeatedly drawn attention to the impermissibility of using contrived pretexts for including purely internal political matters on the agenda. Why has the United States resorted to this ploy today, when the internal situation in Iran is already being normalized? Incidentally, we should thank Washington for that, considering that its energetic messages of encouragement and motivation to the people of Iran have gone a long way to helping to unite Iranian society on a basis of anti-American feeling. It would seem that an irrational allergy to Iran has blinded the United States to what is actually going on there, replacing reality with wishful thinking. Needless to say, we deplore the loss of life that has resulted from the less than peaceful protests. But let Iran itself deal with its own problems, particularly since this is happening now.

The Council's energy is being dissipated. Instead of directing it towards resolving the serious crisis situations in Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Iraq, Yemen, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Africa, the United States is proposing to interfere in the internal affairs of States. But we do not want to participate in the destabilization of Iran or anywhere else. We would do better to conduct an objective assessment of the situation with regard to a settlement in the Middle East, including of the question of Palestine. If we were to persist in this logic, we would have had to convene a Security Council meeting after the notorious events in Ferguson, Missouri, or when violent methods were used to drive out the Occupy Wall Street movement in Manhattan. Or perhaps we should call a Council meeting when some Western country experiences a wave of demonstrations?

We do not have to delve very deeply into history to cite many examples that have resulted from short-sighted actions involving interference in internal affairs and attempts to change objectionable regimes and impose recipes for democracy. Unfortunately, owing to numerous instances of violations and disregard for the founding principles of the Charter — such as the independence and sovereign equality of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and the peaceful settlement of disputes — the situation in many Middle Eastern countries that until recently were stable has become a horror. The occupation of Iraq on an openly false pretext, the results of which are still a heavy burden to the people of Iraq to this day; the crude manipulation of the Security Council's mandate unleashing destruction and unremitting chaos in Libya; the methodical incitement to internecine strife in Syria and flirtations with terrorists there; the war in Yemen — all of those gaping wounds will continue to remind us of the pernicious ideology of geopolitical engineering and attempts to control the destinies of other States and peoples. However, they prefer not to remember such things, and when we recall them, to pretend that they have nothing to do with them.

We are sometimes asked why we maintain a cautious approach to the concept of the prevention of violent extremism. The United States delegation's attitude to what is going on in Iran is an apt example, because it illustrates the essence of our concerns. The source of the problems is said to be the suppression of peaceful protests and the cruel and undemocratic regime. Parallels are drawn with the events in Syria in 2011; a threat to international peace and security is declared; grounds are thereby established for the necessity of outside interferences in Iran's internal affairs. In this way, the outline is laid down for the vision advanced by the United States and a number of other countries of violent extremism and its drivers. Meanwhile, incitement from outside and calls for so-called changes can themselves contribute to radicalization and violence, whether in Iran or somewhere else.

The real reason for convening today's meeting comes not from efforts to protect the human rights and interests of the people of Iran but from a veiled attempt to exploit current events in order to continue the policy aimed at undermining the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) for resolving the situation regarding the Iranian nuclear programme. Similar assessments of the current situation were voiced earlier in Berlin and Paris. In our view, deliberate attempts to weaken and undermine the international community's adherence to the JCPOA are unacceptable, considering that it represents the fundamental achievement of the past few years in the area of nuclear non-proliferation and diplomatic efforts to preserve regional and international peace and security. This is particularly true when the International Atomic Energy Agency has been consistently confirming Iran's full compliance with its obligations. Instead, the United States continues to introduce unilateral restrictions that run directly

counter to international law. We continue to ask whether it has any means in its diplomatic toolkit other than sanctions.

Instead of trying to involve the Council in interfering in States' internal affairs, it would be a good ideal for the Council to support helpful initiatives for expanding the regional dialogue on security issues, in a framework that could enable answers to be found to many questions and concerns. Russia has proposed an initiative for establishing confidence-building measures in the Persian Gulf region. The relevant provision of resolution 598 (1987), which directs the Secretary-General to formulate measures for security and stability in consultation with regional stakeholders, is still unfulfilled to this day. It would be helpful to consider the Secretary-General's ideas for launching a political dialogue process for resolving existing differences between key countries of the region.

I would like to think that there will be no more meetings such as this one during your presidency, Sir, nor during the next, and that the Council will occupy itself with the work it is mandated to do under the Charter of the United Nations.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Kazakhstan.

I would first like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun for his complete and factual briefing.

The position of Kazakhstan is very consistent and based entirely on adherence to the norms and principles of international law. The Security Council deals with issues related to the maintenance of international peace and security, and respects the sovereignty of States. We regret the loss of life that has occurred in the Islamic Republic of Iran, but Kazakhstan considers the developments there to be a domestic issue that does not fall under the mandate of the Security Council, since it does not represent a threat to international peace and security.

We should be very vigilant, however, and we reiterate the importance of maintaining global stability worldwide and in the Middle East, in particular, by reducing violence and preventing the emergence of new tensions. We already have too many issues to address in that region. We truly believe that disputes should always be resolved by peaceful means in order to prevent the further escalation of violence and should not become an inspiration to extremist forces. We therefore join others in calling on Iran to restore trust and mutual respect in its society among all the social groups involved. We note that the level of tension in Iran has decreased and the situation is gradually normalizing. We hope that this trend will continue and that a peaceful solution will eventually be found, based on the mutual tolerance and wisdom of the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Whatever the recent developments in Iran, they should not undermine the sustainability of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) for the Iranian nuclear programme. The world community must remain committed to the JCPOA, which has been successful and constitutes a factor in regional security.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): The move by the United States to seize the Council of protests in Iran by some of our citizens for their legitimate grievances — some exacerbated by none other than the United States itself, in dereliction of its obligations under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action — is an abuse of its power as a permanent member and an abuse of the Council itself. It is unfortunate that, despite the resistance on the part of some of its members, the Council has allowed itself to be abused by the current United States Administration in holding a meeting on an issue that falls outside the scope of its mandate, putting on display the failure of the Council to fulfil its real responsibility in maintaining international peace and security.

It is to the discredit of the Security Council to take up a matter that is of a purely domestic nature while failing abjectly to lift a finger when it comes to genuine issues, such as the long-lasting occupation of Palestinian territory — to which this item is dedicated — and the indiscriminate bombing of Yemen over the past three years, which has so far resulted in the deaths of thousands of human beings and brought hunger, disease and destruction to the Yemeni people. All such failures of the Council are all attributable to the obstructionist approach of the United States delegation, and the list goes on and on.

This is nothing but another desperate attempt by the United States Administration to escape forward, as it has lost every shred of moral, political and legal

authority and credibility in the eyes of the whole world. Following the acts of disruption undertaken by the United States Administration, such flouting international law and disrespecting the practices of civilized behaviour in international politics, it is now desperately reaching for any straw to keep it afloat.

There is a long history of United States bullying at the United Nations, but this is a preposterous example. The purely internal affairs of a nation — in this case, protests that the Iranian Government has addressed with the utmost respect for the rights of protestors and made every attempt to deal with peacefully, despite violent infiltrators and direct encouragement by foreign forces, including the President of the United States — cannot be the subject of debate by the world's most important security organ.

I would be remiss if I also failed to mention, for those who may not remember, the United States long history of intervention in the internal affairs of Iran. A continuous pattern of disruption in the course of the democratization process in Iran can be traced back to the coup staged by the United States against Iran's democratically elected Prime Minister in 1953. Hostile acts intensified once the Iranians rose up to overthrow their dictator ruler, who was, unsurprisingly, loved by the United States Government. Since then the United States has, among other things, backed attempted military coups and acts of sabotage in Iran; imposed illegal and inhumane unilateral sanctions against ordinary Iranians; unconditionally supported Saddam Hussein in his eight-year destructive war against the Iranians, including by providing him with chemical weapons; and even directly engaged in military confrontation with Iran in defence of Saddam. I would also refer to the 290 innocent lives lost — including 66 children — on board Iran Air flight 655, which was shot down in July 1988 by the United States Navy in the Persian Gulf. It would be a remiss of me not to recall that the United States shamelessly decorated the Commander who gave the order to fire.

While President Trump may be enamoured of the fact that no protesters demonstrated against his presence while he was in our neighbourhood a few months ago — he may be unaware that they have no right to protest — the fact is that in every democratic country citizens will, from time to time, take to the streets to protest one thing or another, and Iran is no exception in that regard. In every country the security forces — be they police, national guards or others — are present to ensure that protests remain peaceful, and Iran is, again, no exception. However, while the United States accuses Iran of suppressing protests, one can only gasp at the hypocrisy when viewing images of Occupy Wall Street protestors being beaten and dragged by American policemen; or, to go back in time, when National Guardsmen fired on and killed peaceful student protestors at Kent State University; or when watching film of the protests outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968.

More recently, we can rewind to the 1992 Los Angeles riots over the brutal beating of Rodney King by policemen. The killing of innocent African-Americans at the hands of law enforcement continue unabated, as we all know, when the California Army National Guard, the 7th Infantry Division and the 1st Marine Division were called in to restore order. A total of 63 people were killed during the uprising; 2,383 were injured and more than 12,000 were arrested. I do not recall any member of the Security Council calling for debate on that issue when the United States military was involved in suppressing domestic unrest. Nor was there debate in 1993, when the Federal Bureau of Investigation raided the Branch Davidian headquarters in Waco, Texas, after a 51-day standoff, killing 83 men, women and children, the vast majority of whom were entirely innocent of any crime. It would behoove the United States Ambassador — who perhaps was busy with other priorities at the time of their occurrence — to read up on these travesties of justice on American soil before condemning others for far less.

But it is not just the United States that has an unenviable record in dealing with protestors. In 2005 in France, then Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy declared a zero-tolerance policy towards protests emanating from the deprived suburbs of Paris and other major French cities, referring to demonstrators — largely poor immigrants — as "scum". With almost 3,000 arrests and several deaths, the unrest was quelled only to re-emerge in multiple other forms, most recently in 2017, when the police rape of a young French citizen of African origin once again triggered protests. I do not, however, recall the Security Council being summoned for a debate on this.

In 2011 in the United Kingdom, then Home Secretary Theresa May utterly condemned the violence amid protests in her country, saying that such

disregard for public safety and property would not be tolerated. Meanwhile, Prime Minister David Cameron warned rioters,

> "You will feel the full force of the law. And if you are old enough to commit these crimes, you are old enough to face the punishment."

In the span of merely a few days, some 3,100 arrests were made. The authorities having been told that they could ignore existing sentencing guidelines, two young men who had promoted riots via Facebook, with the proposed disturbances not having been attended by any other people, were handed four-year sentences. I do not recall any country among the self-described civilized democracies bringing any of these reactions to protests to the attention of, let alone opening a debate at, the Security Council.

We have hard evidence of the violence in Iran committed by a handful of the protestors, in some cases resulting in the deaths of policemen and security officers, having very clearly been directed from abroad. These violent elements surfaced in the crowds as early as Friday evening last week, at the inception of the protests. At that point, the hands of elements from outside Iran, including instigators based in the United States and Europe, began to be visible. The incitements to violence included encouraging and training people to use Molotov cocktails, seize ammunition depots and stage an armed uprising.

One United States resident took to social media to order the killing of 120 members of our security forces, threatening that those to be included among the killed were their families in their homes. This same United States resident publicly stated to United States media, with a complete sense of impunity, that they should burn down Government mosques and police stations. It was clear enough not just to us but also to third parties that Telegram Messenger executives decided to block some of the violence-inciting channels, citing a line one should not cross.

All of this is also well documented in the mainstream media. In one case, a man with an extensive criminal record captured a fire engine and ran it over a car, murdering the driver and his 12-year-old son. In some other cases, hooligans became involved and looted shops and banks. Altogether the peaceful, legitimate protests — which my Government has emphatically confirmed are a constitutional right that has been respected since the Islamic Revolution — were abused and hijacked to stage vandalism, hooliganism and, in several cases, the firing of weapons.

President Trump and some other United States politicians have enjoined the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) and its patrons in our region to openly incite and encourage violence. It is the ultimate irony that the country whose Head of State has thrown his lot in with those visiting violence and destruction on Iran should have its United Nations Ambassador, who has a history of ignorant and belligerent comments against my country, bring it as an issue for debate to the Security Council.

If anything, it is Iran that should be demanding a debate and investigation into how and why foreign elements are allowed with impunity to encourage and support unrest and violence in another sovereign and founding State Member of the United Nations. For example, let us debate why the United States has failed, in spite of repeated official requests, to stop the incitement to violence and the murder of innocent civilians from its territory, or why some European countries continue to provide safe haven to terrorists who are inciting violence and armed rioting as we speak. Why are social media sites that promote and teach the use of Molotov cocktails and boast about people using arms to kill in Iran operate freely in their territory, in spite of clear evidence? These are the real issues that need to be addressed.

In order to make this farce into something more than a mere waste of time, let us discuss something else that the Council has not but should deal with. The free flow of information has brought with it the spread of fake news and other forms of information wars. These threats are common to all free and sovereign nations. We are not alone in finding it necessary to formulate solutions to these challenges. Recently, French President Macron also lauded efforts to increase transparency about the ownership of websites, including their foreign funding, and the further empowerment of Government agencies to fight against any attempt at destabilization by television stations controlled or influenced by foreign States. He also suggested countering social media channels used as propaganda by introducing laws to disclose the source of funding for particular sponsored content.

Such measures are needed not simply to fight back against fake news, rioters and electoral interference, but also and more ominously in the fight against terrorists, including ISIS. That fight is not zero sum; we will either win together or lose together.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8153

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8153rd meeting
Tuesday, 9 January 2018, 9.30 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Umarov	(Kazakhstan)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Ms. French

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2018/16)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

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The meeting was called to order at 9.40 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2018/16)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/16, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix (*spoke in French*): As is customary at this time of year, Mr. President, allow me to begin by wishing you all the best for 2018, welcoming the new non-permanent members of the Security Council and, of course, wishing your country, Kazakhstan, all the best for its presidency for the month of January.

I welcome this opportunity to address the Council once again on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) (S/2018/16), which has been submitted to the Council, takes stock of the situation and makes recommendations on the steps to be taken.

A year ago the Council met (see S/PV.7856) to welcome with great hope the signing, under the auspices of the national Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Comprehensive and Inclusive Political Agreement of 31 December 2016, which made it possible to defuse political tensions in the country and chart a course towards the holding of transparent and credible elections by the end of 2017. One year later, I regret to inform the Council that implementation of the agreement has been only partial. Although non-negligible advances have been made in preparing the elections in the past year, the acts of violence that took place during the demonstrations on 31 December last in Kinshasa and in the country's interior are reminders of the fact that the political situation remains very fragile.

The security situation is also cause for grave concern. As the Council is aware, United Nations peacekeepers suffered their heaviest losses in 20 years when the advance base of the Tanzanian contingent in Semuliki, North Kivu, was attacked, presumably by rebels of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). The deaths of those Tanzanian peacekeepers following several hours of combat underscores, as if we needed to be reminded, the volatility of the security situation in certain parts of eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I must also remind the Council that United Nations civilian personnel are also exposed to security risks in certain parts of the country. The deaths in March last year of the two members of the United Nations group of experts in the Kasai region is a tragic reminder of the situation.

Given this backdrop, I will focus my statement on the political and security challenges facing MONUSCO in the coming months and identify potential ways forward.

The delays in the electoral process, the legitimacy crisis of the institutions of the Republic and the lack of progress towards implementing defusing measures have led to frustration, impatience and tensions, which led to acts of violence last December. Let me take this opportunity to condemn the violent repression by the national security forces of the demonstrations organized by civil society on 31 December last. It is key that the competent national authorities conduct the necessary investigations to identify the perpetrators and bring to justice those presumed responsible for human rights violations.

I also deplore the fact that the national security forces created obstacles for the MONUSCO troops who were patrolling on 31 December. Activities related to the monitoring of the political, security and human rights

situation are part and parcel of MONUSCO's mandate and should be fully supported by the authorities.

Given these challenges, it is vital that all sectors of the Congolese political class refrain from any acts leading to confrontation or to violence. Dialogue remains the only way to resolve the political challenges facing the country.

(*spoke in English*)

Although political tensions persist, electoral preparations are advancing. The long-awaited electoral calendar was published on 5 November 2017, the amended electoral law was promulgated by the President on 24 December 2017, and the voter registration process is expected to conclude in February.

It is essential that all political actors play a constructive role in the implementation of the electoral calendar. The Government, the ruling majority, the opposition and civil society, and the Independent National Electoral Commission must all play their part in in ensuring that electoral preparations proceed in a timely fashion.

It is imperative that the political leaders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo adhere to the Constitution, the 31 December 2016 Political Agreement and the electoral calendar, which together provide the political and legal framework for the holding of free, fair and credible elections, leading to a peaceful transition of power and the consolidation of the country's democratic institutions. Political brinkmanship and a refusal to compromise would only result in further delays and a deepening of the political crisis.

The concerted support of the Council, key international partners and regional actors remains key to advancing the political process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Through his good offices, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Maman Sidikou, working in close collaboration with Special Envoy Said Djinnit and regional actors, has worked tirelessly to ensure that the main political actors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remain committed to the 31 December 2016 Political Agreement despite their many differences. Thanks to their efforts, the United Nations has strengthened its cooperation with the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community in support of the political process. It is essential that the region continue to impress upon the Congolese political leaders the need to pursue dialogue and place the legitimate aspirations of the Congolese people above their own interests.

At the same time, it is imperative that the Democratic Republic of the Congo's partners, working in close collaboration with the Government and the electoral authorities, provide the necessary political, financial, logistical and technical support to ensure the timely holding of credible elections. Further delays in the electoral process risk not only fuelling political tensions but also compounding an already fragile security situation.

In recent months, armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo have launched repeated attacks on positions of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), inflicting losses on the FARDC and capturing, albeit temporarily, resource-rich territories. These attacks, mainly involving Mayi-Mayi groups, are taking place in a context of competition for natural resources and continued intercommunity violence, often fuelled by local political actors seeking to take advantage of the current situation.

The impact on the civilian population has been severe, with more than 4 million persons internally displaced as a result of violence and humanitarian agencies predicting that this figure could rise significantly this year. It is, however, encouraging to note that the FARDC is gradually regaining the initiative against the Mayi-Mayi groups and taking control of territories previously lost to the armed groups.

MONUSCO remains actively engaged, in line with its strategic priorities, in the protection of civilians. As the Council will recall, in late September MONUSCO acted decisively in support of the FARDC in repelling an attack by Mayi-Mayi Yakutumba on Uvira, the second-largest city in South Kivu. The actions of MONUSCO, which were critical in preventing the fall of the city, were a tangible demonstration of the Mission's readiness to take robust action against armed groups that pose a threat to the civilian population.

In Beni territory, North Kivu, after being dormant for months following major operations by the FARDC and MONUSCO in 2016, the ADF resurfaced in the summer of 2017, carrying out deadly attacks against civilians, the FARDC and MONUSCO. The killing of 15 Tanzanian peacekeepers of MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade and the wounding of 44 others on

7 December 2017 was the latest in a string of deadly attacks perpetrated by suspected ADF elements.

When I visited Semuliki, shortly after the incident, I witnessed the particularly difficult terrain in which the Brigade operates and the violence of the attack that the assailants carried out against the base. Despite the heavy losses sustained by the Tanzanian troops, I was reassured by the Tanzanian authorities in Dar Es Salaam that they remain committed to addressing the threat posed by the ADF and other armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. I wish to take this opportunity to once again convey my deepest condolences to the Government and the people of Tanzania for this tragic loss.

The asymmetric nature of the threat posed by the ADF requires a combination of military and non-military means. Neutralizing the ADF will require much closer regional cooperation, enhanced information-gathering and analysis, disruption of the political and economic support networks of the group, strengthened cooperation among MONUSCO and the national security forces, and targeted military operations.

As part of the Secretariat's response to the Semuliki incident, the Secretary-General has appointed former Assistant Secretary-General Dmitry Titov to lead a special investigation into the circumstances surrounding the Semuliki incident that will provide recommendations on actions required to address the ADF threat and enhance the ability of MONUSCO to address the threat posed by armed groups. Mr. Titov and his team, which includes senior representatives of the Tanzanian armed forces, have already begun their work and will be in the region in the coming days with a view to presenting their findings to the Secretary-General by the beginning of next month. Naturally, we look forward to engaging closely with the Council once the investigation team has completed its work.

Meanwhile, MONUSCO, in line with the strategic priorities reaffirmed by the Security Council following the strategic review, has enhanced its support to the political and electoral processes and is making the necessary adjustments to its civilian, police and military components in order to enable a comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians, including by monitoring and reporting on the human rights situation. Efforts are also ongoing to increase the mobility and flexibility of the force and the Mission's police and civilian components to enable protection through projection.

Specifically, preparations are under way for the deployment of a third rapidly deployable battalion, which will be operational by next month. We are reviewing the statement of unit requirements for rapidly deployable battalions so as to ensure that the two that will be deployed later this year are lighter and more flexible. Within the framework of the Secretary-General's recommendation to review United Nations air assets, MONUSCO has conducted a review to assess how to obtain air assets that are more suitable for its operations and enhance their use.

Regarding the Force Intervention Brigade, efforts are ongoing to train the units in jungle warfare with a view to responding more effectively to the asymmetric environment in which they operate. Steps are also being undertaken to improve information gathering and analysis.

Regarding the police component, the redeployment of a Senegalese formed olice unit (FPU) from Goma to Kinshasa is almost complete, and the unit is expected to be fully operational by the end of this week. Some forward bases have been closed, including in the Bunia area, as the MONUSCO force continues to optimize its presence on the ground. We are also working on the review of statement of unit requirements for FPUs to enable the swift redeployment of FPU elements to other areas of operations based on the evolution of the situation on the ground. I look forward to engaging closely with Council Members and troop- and police-contributing countries over the coming weeks and months to ensure that MONUSCO continues to evolve in response to the challenges on the ground.

On the political and electoral front, I should note that MONUSCO continues to provide logistical and technical support to the Electoral Commission for the voter registration and other electoral activities. As requested in the electoral calendar, MONUSCO has submitted to the Electoral Commission its logistical support plan for the upcoming presidential and national and provincial legislative elections, which would be a major undertaking requiring adequate resources.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to highlight the importance of the continued support of Council members and Member States to MONUSCO. While acknowledging the need to rationalize resources by making better and more efficient use of available

assets, it is vital that MONUSCO be afforded the necessary means to effectively support the political process and address the daunting security challenges that the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to face.

The coming months will be critical in safeguarding the collective investment made by international, regional and national actors in stabilizing the Democratic Republic of the Congo over the past two decades and in preparing the ground for the consolidation of peace and stability in the country and the wider region. The United Nations, through the good offices of the newly appointed Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, will continue to be fully committed to working closely with all concerned actors in achieving this objective.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Maman Sidikou, who is completing his assignment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his tireless efforts in good offices initiatives and in supporting the promotion of human rights and the protection of civilians over the past two years.

The President: I thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations for his illuminating briefing. We fully support the recommendations of the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/16).

I would like to express, on behalf of France, our firm condemnation of the violence utilized by the security forces during the 31 December protests in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which claimed several victims. France once again calls for respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms, including the freedom of expression and the right to information and peaceful protest, which are essential components of a democracy. We highlight the need for proportional use of force in the context of law enforcement. In that connection, we call on the Congolese authorities to fully investigate the violence in order to hold its perpetrators accountable before the law. The Congolese authorities have already shown that they can be proactive in fighting impunity, as seen recently in the conviction, in South Kivu, of 12 individuals for sexual violence.

Credible, transparent and peaceful elections that ensure a peaceful and democratic transition are necessary for the stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the entire region. In that regard, we call for the effective holding of elections, as scheduled in the electoral calendar published on 5 November 2017 and in line the Constitution and the spirit of consensus that prevailed during the signing of the Comprehensive and Inclusive political Agreement on 31 December 2016. We call on the Congolese authorities and Independent National Electoral Commission to take all necessary measures, particularly those that would enable the rapid deployment of a joint team of international experts to support the electoral process in the Congo.

The 31 December 2016 agreement is more important than ever, as it is the latest embodiment of Congolese national consensus. Its full implementation is urgent, as it contains the key measures to ease tension so as to enable credible and peaceful elections. As the Secretary-General points out, no credible electoral process can take place in a context of repression. It is therefore essential that all conditions be put in place so that all candidates can run for office without obstruction. This is all the more important given that security and humanitarian situation remains troubling, as Under-Secretary-General Lacroix noted, and that the blocking of the political process would only exacerbate the instability that threatens the region.

The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is carrying out remarkable work in this difficult context, and I commend the Mission's reconfiguration efforts in order to adapt to the security situation and to the priorities of the mandate. MONUSCO is facing significant challenges, such as the attack in Semuliki. On behalf of France, I once again express our condolences and our solidarity with Tanzania following the tragedy that beset those Blue Helmets. That incident makes it all the more important to reaffirm our support for MONUSCO and its development. France is encouraged, in that connection, by the clear guidelines set in place, and I warmly commend the exceptional work of Mr. Maman Sedikou. We also extend our full support to his successor, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, with whom we have worked closely in her previous position and who we trust completely.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Côte d'Ivoire commends Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping

Operations, for his exceptional briefing on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that connection, I would like to comment on two key issues in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: the current electoral process and the security situation.

With regard to the electoral process, my delegation welcomes the publishing on 5 November, by the Independent National Electoral Commission, of the electoral calendar, thus setting the holding of general presidential, legislative and provincial elections for 23 December 2018 in order to help the country emerge from this ongoing and protracted sociopolitical crisis. To that end, Côte d'Ivoire believes that it is now up to all stakeholders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and in particular the Commission, to do their utmost to ensure adherence to the set date of 23 December 2018 for the holding of general elections, in accordance with the commitments they freely entered into under the Comprehensive and Inclusive Political Agreement of 31 December 2016. All Congolese parties must, in a spirit of peace and mutual trust, work towards the establishment of conditions conducive to the holding of peaceful, credible and democratic elections by 23 December 2018. In that regard, my delegation remains concerned about recent demonstrations that resulted in loss of life, major material damage and numerous arrests of demonstrators. Côte d'Ivoire calls on the Congolese Government to take all the appropriate measures to calm the situation and defuse the sociopolitical climate. We also call on all political actors to exercise restraint and avoid violent demonstrations.

My delegation welcomes the unity among Council members on this political track and the tireless efforts of the Organization to enhance synergy in the efforts of the United Nations and international and regional organizations — in particular the African Union, the European Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the International Organization of La Francophonie and the Southern African Development Community — with a view to a speedy resolution of the crisis.

With regard to the security situation, Côte d'Ivoire expresses its concern about the growing insecurity in the context of widespread human rights violations, fuelled mainly by the proliferation of armed groups in the east of the country, especially in North Kivu and South Kivu, as well as in the west, specifically in the Kasai region. Attacks by such groups led to the deaths of 15 Tanzanian peacekeepers on 7 December 2017. Côte d'Ivoire once again expresses its condolences to the Republic of Tanzania for the deaths of those soldiers and pays tribute to their memory. My country condemns this deadly attack and, as Chair of the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, looks forward to the results of the investigation aimed at determining the exact circumstances of this tragedy and to taking appropriate measures so that such tragedies are not repeated in future.

It goes without saying that the existence of such armed groups poses a serious threat to stability throughout the region and to the overall process for ending the crisis. Taking appropriate measures to deter those groups must therefore be a priority of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), in addition to its efforts to support the political process. In my delegation's view, those are the considerations to be taken into account when it comes to renewing MONUSCO's mandate, which is scheduled for March.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to warmly congratulate Mr. Maman Sidikou, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and outgoing Head of MONUSCO, for the quality of the work he has carried out in an extremely difficult environment, as well as to congratulate Ms. Leila Zerrougui, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, on her appointment to replace Mr. Sidikou. We wish her every success in her new duties.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, first of all, to express the gratitude of the delegation of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea to Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and his team for their comprehensive and detailed briefing this morning on the situation and recent developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the work of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire, Ambassador Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoue, for his outstanding presentation as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. His contributions help us to better understand the situation in the country.

We in Equatorial Guinea have always closely followed events taking place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and all the more so now as a member of the Security Council, because it is a brother country whose problems we cannot stand by and watch indifferently and because we experience its problems almost as if they were ours. I therefore want to express Equatorial Guinea's full commitment to, and support for, bringing about stability and peace in that country.

The delegation of Equatorial Guinea believes that the different political and social actors in the country should understand that the only possible way to overcome the current complex situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is through a transparent, frank and inclusive dialogue carried out in good faith. The need for the different actors to understand one another flows from the enormous responsibility they have to lead the country to credible and transparent elections and to avoid unnecessary delays, which generally lead to more tension and violence. All of the country's groups must join the process of political dialogue with a positive attitude and make their due contributions, which in practice means honouring the agreements signed by the Congolese parties on 18 October and 31 December 2016 on organizing peaceful, credible and transparent elections, in order to pave the way towards a peaceful solution to the political crisis in the country. In that regard, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must play a leading and catalytic role in the legislative and logistical aspects, especially when it comes to supporting the Independent National Electoral Commission so that it can conclude all its preparatory work before the elections, despite the challenges it faces.

The President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, Mr. Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, in his speech on 29 January 2016 on the occasion of the twenty-sixth Summit of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union in Addis Ababa, said:

> "At present, nobody can deny that our security is facing a global terrorist threat and the risks it represents for our societies, as well as the conflicts suffered by certain brother countries. This situation requires our collective mobilization, as well as mutual collaboration and close consultation."

International cooperation is the only way to be able to effectively confront a threat that can no longer be responded to from an exclusively national perspective.

In that regard, Equatorial Guinea is convinced that the contribution of various international bodies, including the United Nations, in close cooperation with the European Union, the African Union, the countries of the region, the Southern African Development Community, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Economic Community of Central African States, is essential in the search for a lasting solution to the political situation in the country. To the same end, Equatorial Guinea would like to echo the call made by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union for the establishment of a coordination mechanism that would include all actors with a view to ensuring effective and coherent support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Despite the significant progress made in the country in recent years with the stabilization of many regions, which we must certainly welcome, the humanitarian and security situation in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains worrying, with persistent abuses and violations of the political and civil rights of the civilian population, prevailing impunity, and illegal exploitation of resources by militias and other various armed groups still active in the area. In that regard, Equatorial Guinea calls for ensuring the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, signed on 24 February 2013 in Addis Ababa, and that its signatories and guarantors take the necessary steps and redouble their efforts to guarantee its full and effective implementation, for which the neutralization of armed groups operating in the east of the country is paramount. The constant incidents of violence and human rights violations must cease, and those responsible for them must be brought to justice.

Finally, I would like to express the deepest condolences of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Secretary-General and Tanzania on the deaths of 15 of that country's peacekeepers. We commend MONUSCO and support its commendable and tireless efforts to promote peace, security and stability in this brotherly country despite the challenges it faces and the sacrifices and losses it has suffered, and not always in a favourable environment. From this Chamber, we would like to encourage the Mission to continue to support the authorities and institutions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in its stabilization and consolidation efforts

in the country, while at the same time we recommend strengthening the Mission so that it can face the great challenges that will arise throughout 2018, until the holding of the presidential, legislative and provincial elections on 23 December.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia thanks Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his briefing. We also welcome the appointment of Ms. Leila Zerrougui as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). We are confident that her experience, technical knowledge and leadership will be of great value to the Mission. We would also like to thank Mr. Maman Sidikou for his services as Head of MONUSCO.

We reiterate our concern about the unrelenting environment of violence and serious insecurity. We also regret that conflict is focused on disputes over access to natural resources, clashes between armed groups, intercommunity tensions and ethnic violence. We strongly condemn such occurrences, including the violent acts that took place during the 31 December protests and, in particular, the threats being made by armed groups in different areas of the country that have led to the continued deterioration of the humanitarian situation, as mentioned in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/16). The report highlights the fact that more than 4 million people were internally displaced, including nearly 900,000 women and more than 2 million children. Also, in recent years, more than 620,000 Congolese sought refuge in neighbouring countries, 100,000 of them in 2017. Approximately 8 million people face severe food insecurity, which represents a 30 per cent increase over the same period last year. An estimated 13 million people will need protection and humanitarian assistance this year, a 50 percent increase over 2017.

We commend the efforts of humanitarian partners and encourage them to continue their work. We also urgently call on the international community and donor countries to pay special attention to this situation, which is now a level 3 emergency, the highest level of emergency identified by the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Bolivia supports the Special Representative's initiatives and good offices with regard to the implementation of the Comprehensive and Inclusive Political Agreement of 31 December 2016, in particular its impact on the implementation of the confidence-building measures enshrined in the Agreement and its efforts to create a positive atmosphere for the holding of peaceful and credible elections. We also highlight MONUSCO's work on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, as well as the repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of members of the various insurgent groups, both Congolese and foreign, operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We commend the intensification of the Mission's efforts to provide security to civilians through its early-warning system, the reinforcement of its troops for its projection strategy and by intensifying its presence at the Semuliki base following the terrible attack on peacekeepers on 7 December 2017. Bolivia associates itself with the words expressed by various members of the Security Council. We express not only our sorrow and condolences, but also our solidarity with the families of the Blue Helmets who died in those circumstances.

Similarly, we offer our support for local conflict-resolution mechanisms that promote peaceful coexistence between communities and joint monitoring with the authorities regarding the spread of insurgent groups in mining areas in the province of Maniema, among other initiatives. We also encourage the Mission to continue all these and other initiatives for peace and stability in the region, in coordination with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its armed forces, in accordance with its mandate.

Bolivia welcomes the publication of the electoral calendar by the Independent National Electoral Commission on 5 November. We highlight the progress made by that body with respect to voter registration and call upon it to adhere to the timeline and to complete the voter registration. The 31 December Agreement must be respected and supported by all actors for the effective conduct of peaceful, credible, inclusive and timely elections leading to a peaceful transfer of power. We urge the signatories of the Agreement to implement the confidence-building measures enshrined in the document. With this understanding, Bolivia takes note of the prompt adoption of laws in Parliament to revise electoral regulations and allocate a budget for the elections.

We commend the consensus of the region for the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework as well as the efforts of the Southern African Development Community and the African Union Peace and Security Council to provide the Independent National Electoral Commission with the necessary resources for the implementation of the 31 December Agreement. We welcome the meeting held on 9 December among the Presidents of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola and the Republic of the Congo, in which a communiqué was issued calling on political actors to safeguard peace and work for peaceful elections. Similarly, we believe that the joint work of the Head of MONUSCO and the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region in preparing the elections, as well as their outreach to national political actors and Government authorities, will be crucial in garnering regional and subregional support.

Finally, the principles of preventive diplomacy and good offices aimed at a negotiated political solution should not be overlooked, while the Congolese people and institutions should take the decisions regarding the future of their country. We must support their decisions on their sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity in order to achieve peace, stability and development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands) (*spoke in French*): The Kingdom of the Netherlands thanks Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing. The picture that he describes is bleak.

A year ago, faced with the threat of a crisis in the Kasai region and in eastern Congo, the New Year's Eve agreement brought about a glimmer of hope. Today the challenge is to revive hope for a way out of the crisis. At a time when the Security Council will soon have to consider the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), three aspects have priority: the political climate, the protection of the civilian population and the serious humanitarian crisis.

With regard to the first aspect, on the political climate, we welcome the publication of the electoral calendar and the concrete measures taken with regard to holding the elections. Congolese citizens hope to have an opportunity to express themselves at the polls in 2018. However, that hope is continually threatened. Following the violent incidents of 31 December 2017, the African Union and the European Union called for respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Congolese people, for when peaceful political protests are met with the use of lethal force and when religious services are interrupted by tear gas, the goal of free and fair elections becomes a mirage.

We wish to express our strong condemnation of the violence committed by the security forces, and we call for respect for human rights. The failure to implement the agreed confidence-building measures undermines the credibility of the electoral process. It is essential to put an immediate end to the harassment of civil society. All parties to the New Year's Eve agreement must reaffirm their commitment to the spirit of that agreement and to the electoral calendar, which is the only viable solution to that toxic political climate.

The second aspect is the protection of the civilian population. The Kingdom of the Netherlands supports the establishment of a special investigation into the recent attacks on peacekeepers in North Kivu. I take this opportunity to reiterate our condolences over the deaths of the MONUSCO peacekeepers. The special investigation will make it possible to assess the level of overall readiness and response of MONUSCO, as well as to identify and to prosecute the perpetrators. More generally, in the context of the strategic review, the Security Council should consider how to ensure that the reform of MONUSCO strengthens its capacity to protect civilians.

With regard to the third aspect, on the humanitarian crisis, the suffering of the Congolese people has reached unimaginable levels. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has classified the new conflict as a level 3 emergency. Approximately 7.7 million people face a severe food shortage, and nearly 2 million children suffer from malnutrition, which will affect them for life. The famine in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is man-made — civilians must be protected from it. The Kingdom of the Netherlands advocates an integrated approach that includes humanitarian aid.

In conclusion, the current crisis is enormous. The Security Council cannot resolve it alone. It must listen to the countries and organizations of the region, promote their involvement and engage with them. While those countries and organizations are affected by the crisis, they also have the means and the duty to mobilize the political will for peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

All the that requires unwavering determination and tremendous efforts, as demonstrated by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. At the end of his term, we would like to thank Mr. Sidikou for his outstanding work at the Head of MONUSCO, which today is the largest peacekeeping operation. We extend our full support to Ms. Leila Zerrougui, who succeeds him, and we are committed to working with her for peace and stability for the Congolese people.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): First of all, let me thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his informative briefing. Let me also take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation for the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and its personnel for their involvement in the stabilization and peace process. Poland strongly condemns the latest attacks on MONUSCO personnel. I would like to offer our sincere condolences to the families of the victims and to the authorities of Tanzania.

We are very concerned about the recent developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We would like to underline that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must comply with its international obligations and protect the rights to free assembly and freedom of speech. It is crucial to guarantee democratic space for all actors involved. We take note of the long-awaited announcement by the Independent National Electoral Commission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo of the electoral calendar. It is important to ensure that the election is held on 23 December, since it is crucial to avoid further tensions and the possible escalation of violence in the country. The activities of the Electoral Commission must be credible, as they constitute the basis for fair elections. We would like to emphasize the importance of the voter registration process and encourage women to take part in it.

Poland encourages further political dialogue among all parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We also express our full support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as for MONUSCO. We believe that regional organizations can play a constructive role in the process of the stabilization of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing this morning. I would first like to acknowledge and very much welcome the appointment of Ms. Leila Zerrougui as the new Special Representative. Of course, we acknowledge and greatly appreciate the services of Mr. Maman Sidikou.

Since our previous meeting (see S/PV.8067), the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has clearly continued to evolve — the establishment of an electoral calendar, the election date set for 23 December, peaceful protests on New Year's Eve, met with repression and deadly violence, and the deadly attack of 7 December on the base in Semuliki, North Kivu, against the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

With the worsening overall security situation throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular in the east, surging humanitarian needs and a political fragility, the key to changing that trajectory is a democratic transition of power and the creation of tolerant political space, based on the holding of credible, transparent, inclusive and peaceful elections in the spirit of the agreement of 31 December 2017. Important building blocks for the elections — the calendar and the electoral law, as well as a budget — are now in place. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the opposition and other key stakeholders now need to contribute constructively to make sure that the elections are held on 23 December of this year. The international community has a role to play in supporting those efforts. Dialogue and coordination with the region will remain key, and we strongly support an active role of the guarantors.

The Security Council should also continue to follow the situation. For the elections to be credible, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo urgently needs to implement the confidence-building measures agreed upon in the 31 December agreement. In that regard, we remain deeply concerned about the continued and recent reports of violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including those of assembly, speech and peaceful protest. The violent response to the events of New Year's Eve represents an unacceptable example of the lack of respect for human rights regarding which there can be no impunity for those responsible.

Ensuring women's full and equal participation in elections is also essential for a credible electoral process, including their safe access to polling stations.

We appreciate efforts to increase women's voter registration in the Kasai region. MONUSCO will continue to play a vital role in supporting the electoral process and in contributing to the protection of civilians. I take this opportunity to express our deepest condolences, of course, to Tanzania and MONUSCO for the losses resulting from the horrendous attack on 7 December.

Lastly, with regard to the continuing deteriorating humanitarian situation that others have also raised, the lack of resilience among the Congolese population makes it extremely vulnerable to conflict. In 2017, more people were forced to flee their homes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo than in any other country in the world. We, Sweden, are proud to be the third largest bilateral humanitarian donor, but we are deeply concerned about the record-low levels of funding to the Democratic Republic of the Congo's humanitarian appeal. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to encourage all countries to consider additional funding to that appeal.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his informative briefing. We also welcome Ms. Leila Zerrougui of Algeria as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), and pay tribute to Mr. Sidikou.

As this is the first time that we are taking the floor to speak on the subject of MONUSCO, we would first like to condemn in the strongest terms the attack on the Blue Helmets of MONUSCO in December, which led to the deaths of 15 peacekeepers and wounding of 44 others. The safety of MONUSCO personnel is absolutely essential to fulfilling its responsibilities, without which it would be unable to protect civilians. We therefore resolutely support the decisions adopted by the Secretariat to implement a plan of action, as well as the investigations led by Mr. Dmitry Titov, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. We also look forward to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's cooperation in ensuring that those responsible are prosecuted and convicted.

Secondly, concerning the political process, we reiterate the importance of maintaining the date of 23 December for the holding of elections, but we also underscore that it is very important that there be no further delays and to ensure that the process be transparent and fair so that it will be acceptable to all stakeholders. The events of late last year demonstrate that the need to maintain the support and participation of the international community to ensure calm conditions allowing for the appropriate transition of power at the end of this year continues to be very important.

Thirdly, from the perspective of sustainable peace, like our colleagues who spoke before us we stress the gravity of the ongoing humanitarian crisis, which is primarily affecting children. The support of the international community and donors is needed to deal with the situation currently faced throughout the Congo. We also draw attention to the consequences of increasing political instability and the deteriorating economic situation, which is reflected in the rate of inflation affecting those most vulnerable. We believe that it is therefore very important to ensure that we decrease poverty and inequalities in a country that is facing many challenges in that regard.

Lastly, we emphasize the role that women and children can play in the political process currently taking place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we will support all efforts of MONUSCO aimed at involving them more substantially in that process.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, and like others who have spoken before me, I thank Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his briefing today. We highly commend the pivotal and important role played by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in fulfilling its mandate in the unstable security situation prevailing in the country.

We also strongly condemn the repeated attacks on the Mission, the latest of which took place in December and was generally the worst of its kind against peacekeeping operations over the past 25 years. It resulted in the killing of 15 Tanzanian peacekeepers, concerning whom we express our condolences to the Government and the people of Tanzania, the families of the victims, and the United Nations. Because such attacks have occurred in the past, we call on the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to pursue and prosecute their perpetrators. We commend

the Secretary-General's appointment of Mr. Titov to lead the investigation into the attack.

We followed with concern the protests that took place late last year and coincided with the date set for elections in the 31 December agreement, which stipulates the holding of presidential elections at the end of 2017, which unfortunately did not take place. Following the publication of the new electoral calendar by the Independent National Electoral Commission, in which the elections were formally delayed until 23 December 2018, opposition forces and their leaders, along with many civil society organizations, renewed their calls for demonstrations against the Government, which unfortunately led to casualties and more than 140 arrests.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, we also express our concern with regard to the facts and statistics contained in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/16) and the Under-Secretary-General's briefing in connection with displaced persons. The Under-Secretary-General stated that those numbers may increase, which would affect the Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring States. In that regard, we commend the work of MONUSCO in protecting and facilitating support for civilians, as well as the role of regional organizations working in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: the African Union, the European Union, the Southern African Development Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. We pay tribute to their work to ensuring stability and security in the country.

As Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I sincerely thank Ambassador Aboulatta, Permanent Representative of Egypt and former Chair of the Committee, for developing its working methods, following up diligently on the political and security situation in the country, and supporting the Group of Experts in fulfilling its mandate, including following up on the investigation into the attack against the two members of the group, Michael Sharp and Zaida Catalán, in March 2017. We also commend the steps taken by the Secretary-General in November to establish a United Nations panel of inquiry to investigate the killing of the two experts, and hope that the arrest of all perpetrators will be effectuated as soon as possible.

Lastly, we congratulate the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, on her appointment as Head of MONUSCO, and thank her predecessor, Mr. Maman Sidikou, for his efforts.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Gata Mavita Wa Lufuta (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January. We are honoured to see the friendly country of Kazakhstan presiding over the deliberations of the Council today. I would like to thank you for taking my country's situation seriously and including it in your programme of work for this month, thereby giving us an opportunity to express our point of view on the issues under discussion. I would also like to take this opportunity to once again thank the Council on behalf of the Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the untiring efforts of the United Nations to find solutions to the conflict that has prevailed in the eastern part of our country for several years.

We have thoroughly studied the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/16) on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), which Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, has just briefed us on. While we are grateful for his presentation, we believe that we can usefully improve the Council's understanding with some explanations on various points brought up in the report. In order to do that, we will touch on the political situation, the steps being taken to lessen political tensions, the security situation and, very briefly, on the strategic dialogue.

With regard to the political situation, during the last three months of 2017 the attention of every political stakeholder in our country was once again focused on the electoral process. As we mentioned in October (see S/PV.8067), the work of updating the electoral register, which had entered its last phase with the enrolment of voters in Kasai and Kasai Central provinces, as well as in the Luilu and Kamiji territories of Lomami province, will end this month. As of today, the registered voters number 45,810,308, of whom 24,095,030 are men and 21,715,278 women. It is important to note that the work of updating the electoral roll was entirely financed by the Government at a cost of $400,821,569.

As the Council can see, the Democratic Republic of the Congo authorities are determined to see that elections are held. On 31 December, President Joseph Kabila Kabange emphasized in an address to the nation that

> "today's adoption and promulgation of the Election Act, the registration of the electoral rolls and the subsequent distribution of seats and establishment of polling stations, in accordance with the electoral calendar published by the Independent National Electoral Commission, will lead us ineluctably to the holding of elections".

All of the active stakeholders in the country, especially the candidates, must work together to respect the established timetable. After the publication of the calendar, which, as we all know, fixed 23 December 2018 as the date for the elections, that part of the opposition that still resists compromise and everything that is being done to complete the process in an atmosphere of calm has continued to make waves.

The Council will undoubtedly agree with me that while we await the elections scheduled for 23 December 2018, the attitude we need from the political stakeholders and our citizens generally is a willingness to do everything possible to ensure that we are well prepared for these deadlines in an atmosphere of calm. It is therefore not helpful to be dealing with the agitation and protests that gave rise to the events of the kind that we experienced on 31 December organized by the Secular Coordination Committee, which is part of the Catholic Church, and supported by a fringe opposition that has rejected all compromise since the process began. The truth is that while agitating for elections, this fringe opposition does not actually seem to want to see them held.

Since we have to discuss the events of 31 December, it is important to point out that we have a law in the Democratic Republic of the Congo governing the organization of public demonstrations that requires that the relevant authorities be sent a request indicating the time that the demonstration will start, the route it will follow and the starting and ending points, in order to enable the security forces to keep order and protect the protesters if necessary. The information we have from the relevant authorities shows that the demonstration organizers did not comply with that legal procedure. Indeed, the letter that the Secular Coordination Committee sent to the Governor of Kinshasa on 27 December contained none of the information I have just described. Nor did it give the Committee's address so as to enable the city authorities to reach the interested parties in order to get the necessary details. In the circumstances, the Governor of the city could not authorize the holding of the demonstrations.

In any case, the Committee is not part of the official structures of the Catholic Church, which would therefore not recognize it legally. This explains why a large number of dioceses in the country and even parishes in the capital did not support the demonstration organizers. As for the results of these events, the information we have from the relevant authorities is that the Congolese National Police documented no deaths in places of worship in the Catholic parishes in two of the 49 dioceses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — that is, 10 parishes of 152 in the Kinshasa diocese, and one parish in Kamina diocese in Haut-Lomami province. However, five violent deaths were recorded on 31 December for the entire country, with no causal link to the events in question. Two of the deaths were of thieves — one a motorbike taxi driver by profession, José Fataki, a resident of No. 2 Kwenge quarter in Matete commune, and another who is still unidentified — both killed by the guards of a cold-storage room in the Mototo quarter in Matete commune, which they were robbing. Their bodies were brought by their accomplices to Saint Alphonse parish, near the commercial establishment they robbed. Father Hugues Ndongisila, the parish priest, confirmed this version, saying that the two who died were neither Christians nor demonstrators, and were not killed within the parish. The third was a Kamuina Nsapu terrorist, first name Arnolde, who was already wanted by law enforcement for other previous criminal activities and who had been mortally wounded during his participation on 31 December in an armed attack on two police stations at the Liberté market in Masina commune in Kinshasa that took place around two o'clock in the afternoon, long after public order had been restored. The fourth death was of a Congolese National Police officer named Mfufumba Latanase, from the mobile operations squad at the police station in Nsele commune, killed by Kamuina Nsapu terrorists in an attack on the Masina community centre. The last was an unidentified terrorist from a cell of the terrorist organization Kamuina Nsapu who had attempted to attack the offices of the military auditor in Kananga in Kasai Central province and was killed in clashes with security forces.

With regard to the law-enforcement personnel who attempted to enter the churches, the city's Governor, who condemned the situation, indicated that an investigation had been opened and that those found guilty would be punished. Regarding MONUSCO's other allegations, the Government is prepared to share information with it so as to ensure a full investigation of the situation on the ground, in order to take the necessary measures.

In any case, the Government deplores this avoidable situation, as an electoral register has already been updated and an electoral calendar published, so the path has already been cleared for the holding of elections in December.

To conclude on this point, my country's authorities would like to thank the United Nations and all international partners who continue to support the Democratic Republic of the Congo in order to ensure that the electoral process, which has been proceeding smoothly to date, has a successful outcome for the people of the country.

As far as the confidence-building measures set out in the Comprehensive and Inclusive Political Agreement of 31 December 2016, the report notes that 107 political prisoners are still being detained. Information provided by the Government indicates that all so-called political prisoners have been released, except for two individuals who were not detained for political reasons: Mr. Diomi Ndongala and Mr. Claude Muyambo. As we have already stated, these two individuals are being prosecuted for violations of common law. The first was convicted of the rape of two minor twin sisters and the second for having illegally acquired privately owned buildings. Mr. Moise Katumbi is being prosecuted for violations that are similar to those committed by Mr. Muyambo.

I think that the Council will agree that the Government, which is supposed to protect everyone and ensure justice, cannot intervene in the affairs of private citizens in such a way that the strongest would be favoured over the weakest.

As noted in paragraph 13 of the report, the security situation has improved in most conflict areas, in both North and South Kivu and in Kasai. This is despite the fact that, as underscored in the report, there has been heightened activity by certain national and foreign armed groups in North Kivu involving targeted attacks against the civilian population, the Congolese security forces and Blue Helmets.

There is no need to recall here that in spite of all of the efforts that we have undertaken together to restore peace and security in that part of the country, these attacks have already taken the lives of thousands of Congolese people, members of the security forces and several peacekeepers. Here I would like, on behalf of my Government, to strongly condemn these attacks and to pay tribute to the memory of the brave Tanzanian peacekeepers who lost their lives on 6 December 2017, at a time when we still very much needed them. This sad and unacceptable situation forces us to review our methods of work by strengthening our strategic measures so as to achieve better outcomes and avoid having to deplore any further loss of life.

As far as the presence of various foreign armed groups such as the Allied Democratic Forces, the Lord's Resistance Army and the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), as we have always underscored, our armed forces, which have made tremendous sacrifices in combating these criminals, will continue their efforts in cooperation with MONUSCO to completely eradicate these groups, in order to allow our people to live in lasting peace.

In connection with the operations being conducted to eradicate these groups, my Government appreciates the repatriation efforts undertaken by MONUSCO in cooperation with the Governments of the countries whose nationals are members of these groups. That is the case, as mentioned in the report, of the repatriation to Rwanda of members of the FDLR and the resettlement in Ethiopia, Kenya, the Sudan and the United States of 219 combatants of the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Sudanese People's Liberation Army in Opposition. My Government would like to see these efforts continue until the repatriation or resettlement in third countries of all combatants who are still in transit camps.

In the same context, I would like to focus once again on the case of the 340 FDLR combatants who have been awaiting repatriation in transit camps in Kanybayonga, North Kivu; Walungu, in South Kivu; and Kisangani, in Tshopo. I would like to reiterate once again to the international community my Government's call for their repatriation to their countries of origin or, failing that, to a third country outside the Great Lakes region.

I cannot conclude without mentioning the Kasai provinces and Kasai Central, which were the targets of terrorist attacks by the Kamuina Nsapu militia.

As the Council is aware, calm has been restored, and investigations are under way to determine the exact circumstances of the crimes committed and to prosecute and punish those responsible.

Before concluding, it is important to note that my Government would like to see the strategic dialogue accelerated, in accordance with resolution 2348 (2017), so that the next report of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO, which will be a reference document in the context of the upcoming renewal of the mandate of MONUSCO, will provide a coordinated vision that includes the views of both parties.

I would like also to express the deep appreciation of my Government to Mr. Maman Samba Sidikou, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for the work he did during his term as Head of MONUSCO to ensure that peace was restored in my country. My Government is very grateful to him.

In the same context, my Government welcomes the appointment of Ms. Leila Zerrougui as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we assure her that we will cooperate fully with her, as we did with her predecessor, in order to enable her to successfully discharge her mandate.

Finally, my delegation would like, as we begin this new year, to convey to all members of the Council its best wishes for a successful 2018.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.8154

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8154th meeting
Wednesday, 10 January 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Umarov	(Kazakhstan)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco

Agenda

Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53)

Letter dated 8 December 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/1037)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2017/1117)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53)

Letter dated 8 December 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/1037)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2017/1117)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Colombia to participate in the meeting. On behalf of the Security Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Óscar Naranjo, Vice President of Colombia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/1037, which contains the text of a letter dated 8 December from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, and document S/2017/1117, which contains the text of a report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

I now give the floor to Mr. Arnault.

Mr. Arnault: I thank the members of the Security Council for the opportunity to introduce to the first quarterly report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Verification Mission in Columbia (S/2017/1117), which began its operations on 26 September last year, following the completion of the agreement on the ceasefire, the cessation of hostilities and the laying down of arms.

Before going any further, let me say that it is a great pleasure to share the floor with Vice President Naranjo, who was a key actor during the protracted negotiations that brought the conflict between Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and the State to an end a little over a year ago. Since then he has been key to the implementation of the peace agreement. The Mission has been privileged to have him as an interlocutor since the beginning and he, together with the President, as well as the FARC, are to be credited for many of the achievements recorded in the Secretary-General's report against the difficult background in which the implementation process unfolds.

The Secretary-General's report was issued a couple of weeks ago in the middle of the holiday season, but I am glad to inform the Council early in the new year of follow-up on some of the measures adopted late last year. On 8 January, the Interior Minister convened the first meeting of the interagency body responsible for ensuring that the early warning by the Ombudsman's Office of impending violence against individuals or communities is quickly acted upon in accordance with an important decree issued on the 18 December.

On 5 January, the National Protection Unit — which, among other tasks, looks after the security of FARC members outside the training and reintegration areas — decided to establish additional protection teams in those areas so that a greater number of ex-combatants can travel safely outside those areas. The Council will recall that while no serious incidents took place in those training and reintegration areas as a result of protection measures by the security forces, the number of killings outside those areas has been a matter of growing concern in recent months. While there is no clear pattern behind those incidents, the increase in the number of protection measures is very appropriate.

Finally, the Council should also note that on President Santos' instructions, the disposal of FARC-EP arms caches has resumed, under the responsibility of the military and with the cooperation of former combatants of the FARC. The outcome is still modest, with approximately 60 caches. It will therefore be important that the operation continue in order to keep weapons out of the reach of illegal groups.

I stress that security in conflict zones must be enhanced because, as the Council is aware, an upsurge in violence in those areas in recent months, widely

acknowledged and condemned by the Government, civil society and the international community alike, has brought about several of the most significant developments noted in the Secretary-General's report. Among those, first and foremost, we stress the decision to proceed with the long-term deployment of security forces and about 600 of the more vulnerable rural districts in the areas most affected by the conflict, including the district where community leaders, human rights defenders, promoters of crop substitution and land restitution advocates were assassinated.

In our view, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of that decision. The control of the territory by the State is inseparable from the permanent physical presence of State institutions those areas. An occasional presence is bound to leave the old or new illegal power structures intact. Of course, the deployment of security forces is not a panacea. One of the specific objectives of such deployment is precisely to pave the way quickly for more proactive social and economic support by civilian State institutions.

The demands of the communities that have borne the burden of the war are simple, few and well known. They call for tertiary roads to break the isolation, health and education services and the titling of their land, without which integration into the legal economy is seriously hampered. That is the objective and we, along with the President and the Vice President, are convinced that the recovery of the zones of conflict, the reduction of violence against communities and their leaders and the long-term success of counter-narcotics efforts start with the stabilization programme undertaken last month. As outlined in the new plan, the Mission will regularly and carefully assess progress, together with the Government and the security forces. As mentioned in the report, we are making slight adjustments to our deployment to that effect.

While the building blocks of stabilization are being put in place, we cannot lose sight of the challenges of reintegration. The political reintegration of the former guerilla organization is on course in the context of the parliamentary and presidential elections this year. It is hoped that local and department elections in less than two years from now will be the opportunity to consolidate further the political integration of the new FARC political party, but we continue to view with concern the socioeconomic reintegration of the 14,000 former combatants.

We are fully aware of the challenges and we praise the efforts that have been made by Government agencies, the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace and the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization in relation to several reintegration measures referred to in the report. However, we must not forget that we are dealing with a large group of former fighters whose level of accumulated frustration with their reintegration process, illustrated by the number of members still in jail, is not easy to overcome All of us — Government, United Nations agencies, international community and civil society — must be diligent and thorough in our support for their reintegration and the development of communities in which they are inserted.

The President has taken the important step of recognizing the need for access to landownership as a major incentive for reintegration and as a staple of many reintegration processes. For their part, many FARC members have demonstrated on the ground that they are willing and able to engage in agriculture, environmental protection and crop substitution. Those are promising developments — but only that. The next few months must be the opportunity to turn the corner and establish what continues to be a fragile process upon a more durable foundation.

Let me now turn briefly to the temporary ceasefire between the Government of Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). A few weeks ago, and even more so today, we would have liked to be in a position to make recommendations with regard to the Mission's involvement in the supervision of the ceasefire beyond 9 January. We are not yet in that position. The ELN voiced very strong reservations concerning the implementation of the temporary ceasefire and the humanitarian commitments attached to it. Although the ELN leadership has proposed negotiating a firmer ceasefire, they have remained, until only recently, silent on their posture following the temporary ceasefire's expiration yesterday. Barely 24 hours have elapsed since the two delegations resumed their discussions in Quito, and it is therefore perhaps a little too early to venture estimating what the future holds for the long-term in terms of negotiations.

In the country, the call for the continued suspension of military action has been unanimous, notwithstanding the many imperfections of the ceasefire. Social organizations, members of academia, the private sector and local authorities hailing from various regions have called on both parties to maintain the ceasefire. In a

statement issued the day before yesterday, and in line with the appeal contained in the Secretary-General's report, the Mission and the Episcopal Conference of the Catholic Church, who were invited as members of the ceasefire monitoring mechanism, stressed the need to maintain the reduced levels of violence that have prevailed over the past three months.

We had hoped that the talks in Quito would have delivered an outcome consistent with those aspirations, and we would have suggested allowing some — but not too much — time for the Secretary-General to make his recommendations to the Council based on those discussions. Unfortunately, it was just announced only a few minutes ago that ELN attacks against pipelines have just resumed. We will follow developments closely in that regard, and keep the Council informed.

In conclusion, let me convey to the Council the following.

First, there is a conviction that, at the highest level of the Colombian Government and within the leadership of the FARC, the commitment remains to moving forward with the peace process regardless of the many difficulties that have been in evidence — and sometimes dramatically so — during the past few months. Much is still needed to keep the process on track and make it stronger, but, with such political will, the appropriate resources and a sustained effort, much can be accomplished.

Secondly, although the outcome of peace negotiations has generated controversy and divisions, and continues to do so to an extent, building peace is a project for which its constituency goes beyond the signatories. We see that in the efforts of many from local authorities to universities, the private sector and civil society, who are eager to partake in opportunities offered by the peace process. The recent meetings held by the commission on truth, coexistence and non-repetition, under the inspiring leadership of Father Francisco de Roux, with prominent representatives of the private sector, victims, civil society and the high-command of the army, are one of many examples of the broader ownership that the process of peacebuilding is developing.

Lastly, let me reiterate the conviction that in these promising and trying times, the unanimous support of the Council, and through it, that of the international community remain a great source of encouragement, resilience and strength.

The President: I thank Mr. Arnault for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): Let me extend a very warm welcome to Vice-President Naranjo. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Vice-President and, through him, to President Santos Calderón for their tireless commitments to peace in Columbia. I also thank Jean Arnault, for his briefing and presentation of the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/1117) detailing the progress that has been made under the mandates of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. I commend him and his team for their continued efforts both in supporting the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peacebetween the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and the Government of Colombia and, more recently, in participating in the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism for the ceasefire by the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN).

The courage and diligence of both parties have allowed many positive steps to take place since the Peace Agreement between the Government of Colombia and the FARC was signed. More than 11,000 FARC members have registered with the United Nations, and are now beginning their reintegration into civilian life. The new political party — the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común — will be able to participate in Colombia's elections this year, and the FARC has handed over its last caches of weapons to the United Nations. Those are remarkable achievements, but we are now getting to the hardest part. Much work remains to be done. As President Santos Calderón said in Cartagena last week, less than 10 per cent of the time set out for the peace agreement to be delivered has passed.

We welcome the continued commitment of both parties to achieve a sustainable peace. We encourage them to continue to work together to overcome the challenges, which are only to be expected following more than 50 years of conflict. As we just heard, those challenges include increasing levels of violence in some areas affected by the conflict and the killing of human rights defenders and former FARC members. I share the concerns that the Secretary-General mentioned in his report, and I therefore welcome the important steps taken by the Colombian Government to tackle them. They include the establishment of a more permanent

and visible presence by the police and security forces, a strengthened early warning system and a renewed focus on investigations by the Office of the Prosecutor. Security must be established in those areas to allow communities to realize the full benefits of the Peace Agreement. I also welcome come the Government's commitment to addressing the issue of access to land for former FARC combatants. All those steps taken together are a clear signal of the Government's commitment to implementation.

Looking ahead, I encourage the Government to Columbia to maintain its focus on adopting the remaining peace legislation through Congress. An early ruling by the Constitutional Court on amendments made to some key laws will be important to maintaining momentum. That includes the ruling on amendments to the special jurisdiction for peace, which are vital to making progress in the transitional justice system. I had hoped that today we would be discussing the announcement of a renewed ceasefire between the Government and the ELN. Instead, I am concerned and disappointed by the recent news that the ELN has broken its ceasefire and squandered the chance of bringing about sustained peace. I urge both sides to work together to find a way of avoiding further civilian suffering.

President Santos Calderón, together with Columbia's leaders, took a bold step in coming to the Security Council for help in 2016. Our support for a sustained peace in Colombia will not waver, and, as Columbia holds elections later this year and goes through political change as all democracies do, it is important to remember that the Peace Agreement belongs to all Colombians, not to any specific Government. The United Kingdom will continue to encourage focus on and commitment to the peace process to bring about real lasting change. That process is unique and will continue to inspire us for years to come, as it has inspired me during all of my time in the Security Council.

This is my final scheduled public statement in the Security Council. I am very pleased to be able to finish my time in New York with a meeting on Colombia — one of our greatest success stories. I wish that all the conflicts that we work on could achieve the peace that has been achieved in Colombia. It is essential that we learn the lessons of that success and apply them to the countless other issues on our agenda, which, frankly, could do with a little bit of that success.

As I leave this role, I want to thank all members of the Security Council with which I have shared this horseshoe table in this famous Chamber and all of their predecessors. I thank them for their cooperation, their insights and all their support over the past nearly three years. I should also like to thank everyone who works for the United Nations, be it here in New York or around the world. I have been continually impressed by their expertise and fortitude. They really are the unsung heroes of the Organization.

Finally, I should like to thank my own team at the United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations, which has supported me with skill, expertise and dedication. I wish all of them the very best for the future.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his committed and brilliant work in the Council.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is grateful for the convening of this informative meeting on the situation in Colombia and the briefing by Mr. Jean Arnault on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. We especially welcome the participation of Vice-President Oscar Naranjo and, through him, convey our gratitude to President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón and his Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Mejía Vélez.

We take this opportunity to reaffirm Peru's commitment to the peace process in the sisterly Republic of Colombia — a commitment based on a shared history and vision of the future, and active cooperation aimed at sustaining peace and the development of our peoples.

We highlight once again the example that the Colombian peace process offers to the international community and to strengthening Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace. Peru expresses its appreciation to the Colombian people and Government, as well as to the various parties involved in the process, their authorities and leaders, for their courage and determination and for having placed the supreme value of peace above all their differences. It is obviously a complex process that faces many challenges at this stage of implementation — no doubt more complex than the previous one — but it looks to the future with hope and conviction that sustaining peace is inseparable from sustainable development. With respect to the latest developments, we want to share the following comments:

Peru supports the comprehensive strategy based on a preventive approach, led by the Government in partnership with local authorities and civil society, to mitigate the factors of risk and vulnerability. In that sense, we highlight the efforts to address organized crime in rural areas formerly controlled by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), within the rule of law and in full respect for human rights.

The laying-down of arms has undoubtedly been a milestone in the peace process. We welcome the efforts of the national authorities aimed at the full implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace so as to minimize the cases of dissidence of the former militants of the FARC. At this stage of the process, we highlight the actions of the Office of the Prosecutor and the importance of the measures adopted by the Government to guarantee the security of all citizens, particularly in the framework of the National Protection Unit and the implementation of the new Horus plan. It is of the utmost importance to prevent and avoid the occurrence of further deaths of social leaders, human rights defenders and former members of the FARC.

We agree with Mr. Arnault that reintegration constitutes a guarantee to prevent the perpetuation of the conflict. In that regard, we consider that the reconversion of the FARC to legal political life and the accreditations granted by the High Commissioner for Peace, with the guarantees that have been provided and other support, are key aspects of the process that undoubtedly require the tolerance and commitment of all Colombian society, which are supported and underwritten by all countries, in particular the members of the Council.

Along the same lines, we value the efforts of national authorities to promote access to land and productive projects in rural areas. These measures go beyond the commitments assumed in the Peace Agreement and complement other reintegration mechanisms and training programes offered by the Government with a view to achieving sustainable peace.

We wish to conclude by welcoming the open, transparent and inclusive way in which the Colombian peace process is being conducted, with the support of the international community. We also welcome the united commitment of the Council, which, at the request of the parties, has monitored the process from its origins, as well as the important work carried out by the Verification Mission in that regard.

From our Latin American perspective, we would also like to acknowledge the work accomplished on this topic by Ambassador Elbio Rosselli Frieri of Uruguay, under whose presidency of the Security Council a visit to Colombia was organized. We also pay tribute to the role played by Ambassador Mattew Rycroft of the United Kingdom on this issue.

As a non-permanent member that only recently joined the Security Council, Peru reiterates its full support for the authorities and the people of Colombia in the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): Let me begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Jean Arnault, for his briefing this morning, and assure him that we continue to support his efforts and the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

I would also like to welcome the presence of the Vice-President of Colombia, Mr. Óscar Naranjo, with us here today. I thank him for his personal dedication and the key role he has played and continues to play for peace in Colombia.

(*spoke in English*)

Over a year has now passed since the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace was ratified by the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and the conflict came to an end. However, ensuring that peace is sustained requires a continuous effort. We commend the political courage and strong commitment to peace of both parties, and their efforts to overcome challenges in the implementation of the Peace Agreement. Last year saw the successful laying down of arms and the conversion of the FARC-Ejercito del Pueblo into a political party. These were truly historic achievements. The security and reintegration of former combatants will mark the next milestone in the journey to consolidate a sustainable peace.

The increasing number of incidents of intimidation, reprisals and killings of human rights defenders, community leaders, FARC members and their families continues to be worrisome and underscores the need for the State to fill the power vacuum and safeguard the rule of law. We welcome the updated stabilization plan

as one measure to address that, and look forward to its speedy implementation.

A redoubled and sustained effort is now needed on the part of all parts of the State, in support of the wider Peace Agreement, including comprehensive rural reform, so that it can rapidly deliver tangible peace dividends for all Colombians. The development of a national reintegration plan would be key in that regard by providing a renewed impetus and ensuring coherence among all actors and initiatives. At this critical time in the implementation of the agreement, the United Nations and Colombia's international partners must lend our full support to the parties, and engage proactively to assist them in reaching their goals.

We would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the work of the Mission on the inclusion and participation of women. We welcome the gender-sensitive analysis in the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/1117). Women's meaningful involvement in the ongoing reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts is essential to attaining long-term peace and stability. In that regard, we see Colombia as serving as a model.

Finally, we note the positive impact on the humanitarian situation of the temporary ceasefire between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). We regret that the ELN has resumed attacks and urge it to renew its ceasefire commitment as soon as possible, and we reiterate that the United Nations and the Security Council must stand ready to assist the parties in monitoring a new agreement. Sweden, as a member of the Grupo de países de apoyo, acompañamiento y cooperación a la Mesa de conversaciones, will assist the process as much as it can.

The Colombian Peace Agreement represents the culmination of an historic process, which brought more than 50 years of conflict and violence to an end. It shows that through political courage and leadership, through dialogue and diplomacy and with supportive regional involvement, even the most entrenched conflicts can be brought to an end, setting an irreversible course for peace. The agreement also acts as a basis for the wider economic and social reforms that will benefit the entire country and all Colombians. It is a visionary ambition and it seems in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and how it connects to the sustaining peace agenda. By remaining committed to the peace agreement, the parties are keeping faith with the hopes and aspirations of the Colombian people for the future of their country. It also bridges divisions inside the country. We must therefore continue to do all we can to support them.

Finally, I would like to say to my dear friend, Matthew Rycroft, how much we will miss him. We appreciate his contribution to this dossier, but also his efforts on so many other issues that the Council has been dealing with. We wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault, for his comprehensive briefing this morning. I would also like to acknowledge the presence of the Vice-President of Colombia, Mr. Naranjo — a key player in the peace process. We thank him for honouring us with his presence and for his personal commitment to the implementation of the peace agreement.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands is a close neighbour of Colombia — as Aruba and Curaçao are off the coast of Colombia and are autonomous countries in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In view of that good-neighbourly relationship, the Kingdom of the Netherlands has politically supported the peace process in Colombia from the start, and we will continue to do so. We are also providing financial support for the implementation of the peace agreement.

Before going into the issue of Colombia, I would also like to acknowledge that this is the last meeting of my good friend and neighbour, Matthew Rycroft. I honour the contribution he has made to peace and security in the world through all of his activities on the Council. We will miss him.

Today, I will address three issues — the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, some of the challenges and the ceasefire.

First, with regard to the Peace Agreement, the Kingdom of the Netherlands commends the historic peace agreement between the Colombian Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). We pay tribute to the achievements of both parties in the peace process. They are remarkable. The peace process is not only about Colombia; it gives hope to many people in many other regions of the world that are torn up by war. Our financial support

to the implementation of the peace agreement focuses on human rights and gender, transitional justice, democratization and land rights.

We thank the Secretary General for his report (S/2017/1117). It contains a clear and realistic overview of the results of the Mission and the progress of the implementation of the peace agreement in general.

That brings me to my second point — remaining challenges and achievements. Of course, the full implementation of the Peace Agreement is key. However difficult it may seem, challenges need to be confronted and dealt with without delay. Only the full commitment to peace by all parties can overcome the challenges that Colombia still faces. A solid national reintegration plan is necessary to make the political, economic and social reintegration of former combatants into society a reality. We hope both parties will be creative in finding ways to give demobilized ex-FARC-members access to land. In that regard, we very much welcome the recent steps of President Santos.

We would also like to stress the important dimension of gender. Given the important role that women have played in the peace process, they should also be able to participate fully in the drafting and implementation of the reintegration plan. The participation of women has proven to be effective and it is crucial to the success of the reintegration plan as well.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands is concerned about the security situation in certain regions and the increase in violence against human rights defenders, community leaders and former combatants. Therefore, we welcome the redesign of Plan Victoria into Plan Horus, which includes the national police and focuses more on areas where the security situation is most critical. We welcome the first steps taken by the Colombian Government to set up a transitional justice system and we look forward to the full implementation of chapter 5 of the peace agreement. In order to reach sustainable and lasting peace, impunity should be put to an end and reparations and guarantees of non-repetition to the 8 million victims should be ensured.

On the ceasefire, we deeply regret the fact that negotiations have been unable to reach an agreement on an extension of the ceasefire. This morning's two attacks took place shortly after the ending of the ceasefire. It would be unfortunate if these attack were the consequence of the decision by the ELN (Ejército de Liberación Nacional) to resume its actions against the Colombian Government. As a member of the group of countries supporting the negotiating table of the peace negotiations between the Colombian Government and the ELN, we call upon both parties to renew the ceasefire. The first ceasefire has greatly improved the humanitarian situation in areas affected by the conflict. A renewal of the ceasefire is in the best interest of the Colombian people and is a necessary precondition for the full participation of civil society in the peace negotiations.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

In conclusion, as a neighbouring country, the Kingdom of the Netherlands remains fully committed to the Colombian peace process and is ready to support the Colombian Government in the implementation of the agreements. We face significant challenges, but we are convinced that the peace process is irreversible.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I too would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault, for his briefing, as well as the Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia, Mr. Óscar Naranjo, for participating in today's meeting. I also thank them for the negotiations and the implementation of the peace agreement reached with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC).

Despite various obstacles, the Colombian Government has been able, over a few years, to launch an historic peace agreement with the FARC that France also believes to be irreversible. This is an agreement that the United Nations in general and the Security Council in particular have supported. After the disarmament and the political transition of that armed group, we have, for a few months, been involved in a crucial phase for the future of the process — the reintegration of ex-combatants.

In the light of the mandate conferred by the Council on the second United Nations mission to Colombia, I would insist on three points.

First and above all, we welcome the mobilization in recent months of the Colombian Government in order to adopt the necessary legislation to implement the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, especially with regard to Special Jurisdiction for peace. We hope that the jurisdiction will have ways to ensure and authorize equitable and independent justice, in keeping with the

commitments undertaken when the peace agreement was signed. Whatever the results of the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections, France calls on all Colombian political actors to embark upon that path.

My second point concerns security assurances. Although former FARC combatants are relatively well protected within the areas of training and reintegration, France regrets an increase in violence in territories previously under the control of the guerilla forces, particularly directed at human rights defenders and civil society representatives. France welcomes the new measures announced by the Colombian authorities prioritizing the fight against that negative trend.

Finally, France wishes to stress a key issue for reintegration and the future of the peace process and welcomes the action of President Santos in that regard — access to land and income sources. We do not underestimate the difficulty of this question. However, it clearly constitutes the key to successful economic and social reintegration of former fighters and to the pacification and lasting stability of territories plagued by half a century of conflict.

In conclusion, I would just like to note that the peace Agreement between the Government of Colombia and the FARC has taken place in the arc of history. Its implementation can encourage other armed groups, led by the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), to follow suit. In this regard, France hopes that the temporary ceasefire between the Colombian Government and the ELN will be promptly renewed and that the negotiations can help to deliver a historic peace agreement.

Finally, I to would like to commend Ambassador Rycroft and his dynamism in the Council. I wish him every success in his new functions at the head of the Department for International Development.

Ms. Tachco (United States of America): Like my colleagues, I would like to offer a very special welcome to Vice-President Naranjo. His work on the peace process in Colombia really is part of history and we are very honoured to have him in the Chamber with us today. I also thank Special Representative Arnault for his and his team's outstanding work to support a lasting peace in Colombia.

As we enter the second year of the historic Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a stable and Long Lasting Peace, we look back at the progress both sides have made in bringing peace to the Colombian people. Before 2016, a majority of Colombians had never lived in a country at peace. All of that changed with the signing of the peace agreement, which brought Latin America's longest war to a close. The Peace Agreement was hailed as a huge success and indeed it was. Colombia became the country that defeated kidnappers and cocaine kingpins and stepped back from the brink of becoming a failed State.

Colombia now faces the immense task of securing the peace and consolidating these gains. In the past year, significant progress has been achieved in one key aspect of the peace accord: disarmament. Nearly 7,000 members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) were relocated to United Nations-monitored disarmament zones and the FARC has transitioned into a political party. Rebels have turned in their weapons and the homicide rate is at its lowest level in four decades. These are visible and concrete signs of progress that benefit all Colombians. But as the past year has shown, ending the war was just the beginning. Colombia is now working to establish the justice that is necessary to preserve the peace. Colombian President Santos Calderón himself has said, "Constructing peace is more than ending the attacks and much more difficult".

The implementation of the peace agreement has turned to political reconciliation and reintegration. Colombia must balance demands for justice with the need for reconciliation to ensure that peace endures and that means the taking on the hard work of securing proper accountability for those responsible for violations and building trust among a people deeply scarred by decades of conflict.

A particular concern is the security vacuum left by the FARC demobilization. The lack of security in formerly FARC-controlled areas, as well as the lack of governance, has led to an up-tick in violence that is very worrisome. New armed groups are battling to fill the space left by the FARC, and there have been continuing attacks on community leaders and human rights defenders.

We welcome the Colombian Government's efforts to expand its presence in former conflict areas to keep paramilitary and illicit groups from replacing the FARC as sources of killing and violence. Effective military and civilian agencies that provide security and Government services in remote areas are critical

to sustaining peace. Meanwhile, the reintegration of FARC combatants into Colombian society is also very crucial. As a number of former FARC soldiers have left the rural camps where they were expected to begin their transition back to civilian life, it is urgent for Colombia to execute a reintegration plan that provides both security for the Colombian people and opportunities for former combatants.

We have also seen some legislative progress, as others have noted, including the approval of the law regulating the Special Jurisdiction for peace, and we hope to see the implementation of other key provisions. The United States is fully committed to supporting Colombia and the implementation of the peace accord. We would also like to echo the disappointment of others about the resumption of attacks by the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, as we saw this morning, and we hope that a new ceasefire can be concluded in the coming days.

We will continue to be a friend and partner to Colombia. We will continue to support security, justice, prosperity and respect for human rights of all Colombians. The people of Colombia know better than most that peace is precious, but fragile. We stand shoulder to shoulder with them in working to preserve this peace and build a better future for Colombia.

I must join my colleagues in thanking Ambassador Rycroft for his service on the Security Council. Ambassador Haley asked me to present this statement to him in front of the Council this morning. It has been a real pleasure and an honour working with him. I think that we all got a little bit choked up during his remarks. We will all miss him very much.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having kindly agreed to convene this important briefing on the situation in Colombia. This is a major concern for all members of our Council.

Before I continue, I would like to hail the presence of His Excellency the Vice-President of Colombia in the Chamber and welcome him to the Security Council. We congratulate Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jean Arnault on the excellent briefing he just gave us, which affords us a clearer picture of the peace process under way in Colombia. We would also like to thank him and encourage him in the light of the tremendous work undertaken by the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

Côte d'Ivoire joins its voice with those of previous speakers in welcoming the remarkable progress that has been achieved in the peace process uunder way in Colombia. This progress is especially reflected in the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a stable and Long Lasting Peace of November, 2016 and the effective disarmament of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and its transformation into a political party. It is also reflected with the ceasefire reached between the Government of Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). We further commend the determination of the various parties to work to achieve peace and national reconciliation.

Notwithstanding these gains, Côte d'Ivoire remains troubled by the delays observed in the implementation of certain relevant provisions of the Peace Agreement, specifically the political, economic and social reintegration of the FARC and the implementation of the necessary reforms to improve the living conditions for people in the areas of Colombia that have been plagued by war — people who aspire to better lives.

Côte d'Ivoire deplores the relapse into insecurity, violence and myriad forms of trafficking in the areas previously occupied by the FARC. Criminal groups and militias are now vying for control of these areas. My delegation further notes that the numerous murders of social leaders and the observed return of former FARC combatants to the areas they previously occupied, which is the result of their lack of prospects, compound the situation in Colombia. We are convinced that peace and security are prerequisites for all harmonious and sustainable development, and we call upon all Colombian stakeholders to commit themselves further to the political process under way. All parties must assume their responsibilities and obligations.

My delegation welcomes the tremendous efforts already undertaken by the Government of Colombia in implementing the Peace Agreement, and we encourage it to persevere in order to ensure the success of this process through tangible measures and the implementation of the structures set up within this framework. In that regard, the next parliamentary and presidential elections, in March and May, should strengthen the national reconciliation process and guarantee genuine peace, by ensuring adequate security conditions for all participants. Peace can be sustainable and lasting only if the reconciliation process is inclusive and involves all Colombians.

My delegation urges the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional to continue their negotiations with a view to a swift renewal of the ceasefire as part of a comprehensive peace agreement. We regret the fact that they have violated the ceasefire, according to the most recent reports available to us.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the readiness of my country, which has emerged from a decade of crisis thanks to the support of the United Nations and the international community, to do its part, with all other members of the Council, for the success of the peace process in Colombia.

Finally, allow me personally to thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom, my friend Matthew Rycroft, for the friendship and the support that he has willingly afforded our delegation since our arrival here in New York. He is leaving us, but I believe that his spirit will continue to support us. We wish him well in his new responsibilities.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): Let me start by thanking Mr. Jean Arnault for a very informative briefing. As well, I thank him and his team for their dedication and commitment in helping Colombia to bring about peace and reconciliation. He has our full support for his efforts aimed at accomplishing the objectives of the United Nations Mission in Colombia. I am also very pleased to welcome Mr. Óscar Naranjo, Vice-President of Colombia.

It has been more than a year since the signing and entry into force of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). We are happy to see that the peace process has brought about tangible positive results. Poland welcomes resolution 2381 (2017), which expanded the scope of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. We believe that the role of the United Nations Mission is critical to the next phase of the implementation of the peace agenda, especially the reintegration process of FARC combatants and the verification of the temporary bilateral ceasefire with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional.

A proper reintegation remains key in order to guarantee that conflict does not reoccur and to ensure a successful political, economic and social integration of the members of the FARC. We would like to stress the importance of the participation of women in the political process. Durable peace can be achieved only when all people — women and men — are equally involved in the formulation of a solution — which, after all, affects their lives.

The Monitoring and Verification Mechanism played an essential role in maintaining the trust between the Government and the FARC. We believe that it should serve as a model for conflict resolution in other conflict-affected areas. The success of the peace process in Colombia remains essential for the region of Latin America. However, it also serves as an example of the positive involvement of the Security Council and a much-needed success story of a United Nations-brokered peace deal. Intense political will is still required on both sides in order to drive the peace process forward. We strongly believe that the parties will remain united in their desire to bring about a brighter future for all the citizens of Colombia.

Poland would like to underline the role of the United Nations Mine Action Service through its programme in Columbia, aimed at ending the suffering of Colombians from widespread landmines. Last year, driven by the outstanding work done by the United Nations Mission in Columbia, Poland decided to contribute to the multi-year appeal of the Department of Political Affairs. We hope that that donation will also help with preventive efforts in Colombia. We are also confident that we, as the international community, will spare no effort to provide assistance for lasting peace to be achieved in Columbia.

In conclusion, allow me to join my colleagues in congratulating Ambassador Matthew Rycroft. Poland has been a member of the Security Council for only 10 days, but I can say that I am truly impressed by his professionalism and his very constructive spirit. I express my greatest appreciation.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia wishes, first of all, to pay tribute to the presence of Mr. Óscar Naranjo, Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia, and to welcome him to the Chamber. We also thank Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, for sharing with the Council the first quarterly report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2017/1117). I also wish to welcome the presence of the many Ambassadors from Latin America and the

Caribbean who are here with us at this meeting. Their presence clearly demonstrates the commitment of Latin America and the Caribbean to this peace process.

In the various conflicts that figure on the agenda of the Security Council, we greatly regret the fact that there have been political processes under way for years without showing any tangible progress and peace agreements that are ignored or are not really implemented. Colombia provides us with a different reality. Of course, that does not mean that there have not been difficulties along the way — there have — but the goodwill and leadership shown by the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) in implementing the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace is something that we would like to see in other conflicts. That same conviction is needed to overcome the difficulties that exist, or that will arise in future.

We are starting a new year, and it is always worth evaluating the cycle that has been completed. The year 2017 was the year of peace in Colombia. That process brought about positive news and demonstrated concrete progress for the Security Council and the international community. The agreement reached by the Government and the FARC represents a tremendous achievement by Colombians, which fills the entire region of Latin America and the Caribbean with pride.

Thanks to that agreement, 53 years of armed conflict came to an end. The FARC laid down their weapons, became the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común and exchanged arms for political participation. Those three specific facts are easy to say, but those of us who are aware the suffering of the Colombian people during that half-century know the value of every minute step that was taken and the effort and cost involved in laying the foundations for peacebuilding. Only those three facts make that process irreversible.

Three months ago, the most complicated stage in the implementation of the Final Agreement began — the political, economic and social reintegration of the ex-combatants of FARC into society, in accordance with points 3.2 and 3.4 of the agreement. That stage is facing difficulties, but should not stop or diminish the significance of the progress made in implementing the Agreement.

Colombia has adopted 107 laws and decrees on reinstatement and security guarantees, on the victims, and on truth, justice and reparation. It has established dozens of institutions and specialized mechanisms and development plans. The support of the international community is paramount. For their part, the United Nations and the Security Council must continue to support this process every step of the way and work to maintain peace. But of course it is Colombians who should be the main defenders of the process. The difference between now and previous attempts is that the Government and the FARC are getting real results.

Given all of this, the Plurinational State of Bolivia believes that we should first redouble our efforts to ensure the reintegration of former FARC combatants into civilian life, starting with the legal reinstatement that is the foundation needed for achieving political, social and economic reinstatement, as established in the Final Agreement. Secondly, security should be strengthened in the areas formerly occupied by the FARC. The latest figures for murders of social leaders and former FARC members are alarming, and we should move faster to establish measures that will ensure a Government presence and protection for residents of those areas. Thirdly, concrete steps must be taken to advance comprehensive rural reforms. In our view, formalizing access to land is fundamental to ensuring stable and lasting peace. With regard to the negotiations with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), we regret the fact that the process has been suspended, and we hope and call for the talks to be resumed as soon as possible.

In conclusion, we would like to highlight the efforts of Special Representative Jean Arnault and his team. Their commitment has been proven both in the implementation of the Final Agreement between the Government and the FARC and in their own work in pursuing talks with the ELN. We would also like to express our special gratitude to three Ambassadors who are in this Chamber today: Ambassador Rosselli Frieri, of Uruguay — not just for his leadership in the work of the United Nations Mission in Colombia but also for his commitment to the issue — Ambassador Rycroft, of the United Kingdom, for his role in the Council's special mission in Colombia, and Ambassador Mejía Vélez, who has been a pillar of the peace process. We would also like to reiterate Bolivia's total support to the peace process led by the Government and FARC. The determination shown both by President Juan Manuel Santos and the FARC's leaders in consolidating peace will go down in history as one of the most important decisions that the Colombian people have ever taken.

The peace they are building belongs to Colombia, but it also belongs to, and is the responsibility of, the whole of the human family.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this discussion. We welcome the participation in today's meeting of Mr. Naranjo Trujillo, Vice-President of Colombia, and we are grateful to Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing. We believe it is important to receive updated information in a timely manner from the source.

In the year since the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), the situation in Colombia has shown positive momentum. The main achievements have unquestionably been the completion of the process of the rebels' surrender of their arms, the transformation of the FARC into a political party and the agreement on a temporary ceasefire with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. We firmly believe that the main reason for those achievements has been Colombians' declared national responsibility for their peace process. With regard to the agreement with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, we hope that the Colombian side will show the necessary political will and take decisions as soon as possible that will enable the Council to renew the corresponding mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

In general, we share the the Secretary-General's assessments in his recent report on the situation in the country (S/2017/1117). However, we do have some comments to make.

We would like to draw attention to a paragraph in the report about the security situation in various parts of the country. The information refers not only to the police and other national bodies, but also to the data of some non-governmental organizations. We would like an explanation as to why this information is not presented as coming from the Secretary-General. The same paragraph indicates that the data provided by non-governmental organizations is consistent with information in the possession of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, but the Security Council did not request data from that body.

That is concerned more with organizational issues. With regard to the situation in Colombia, the Secretary-General's report suggests that there are signs that the main task — the disarming of the FARC — has already been accomplished. We consider that to be an extremely dangerous delusion, especially in the absence of an agreement with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. Colombia will not succeed in achieving a durable peace until every segment of society is satisfied with the situation. Needless to say, on that front, we support the work of the Verification Mission, which is now focusing on just that — ensuring that Bogotá fulfils its obligations. Those efforts should be intensified, especially in the run-up to the forthcoming elections.

Mr. Almunayekh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would first like to thank Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, for his valuable briefing, in which he informed us of the most important achievements and challenges facing the peace process and ceasefire in Colombia.

I also welcome His Excellency Mr. Óscar Adolfo Naranjo Trujillo, Vice President of Colombia, to the Security Council. His presence here today is in itself a testament to his Government's interest in achieving stable and lasting peace in Colombia and a confirmation to the Council of the importance that the Colombian Government attaches to that peace. I also thank and acknowledge his important and vital role in the current peace process in Colombia.

Regarding the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, we take this opportunity to praise the significant achievements realized since it was signed by the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), ending a conflict that had lasted more than half a century. Meanwhile, we emphasize the importance of ensuring that both sides continue to honour their commitments.

After 50 years of conflict, achieving peace will face difficulties and obstacles. We welcome the temporary bilateral ceasefire between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), which expired yesterday, 9 March, and which has facilitated a number of achievements on several fronts, as acknowledged by both parties, the Catholic Church and the United Nations Mission, including a significant reduction in armed clashes between Government forces and those of the ELN, bringing with it a reduction in the level of violence and improvements in the humanitarian

situation. We have also seen the participation of a wide group of social organizations in public meetings with a view to convening a national dialogue in the future.

However, we are concerned about reports received this morning, indicating that the ELN has resumed fighting after the expiry of the ceasefire deadline. We urge both parties to extend it and to put the best interests of Colombia and the Colombian people first. We support the Secretary-General's recommendation that the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission be renewed to ensure the continuation of the ceasefire between the Government and the ELN, in view of the Mission's important role in achieving stability in the interests of the Colombian peace process.

In this regard, I thank the countries that have contributed international observers; Cuba and Norway, the two guarantors of the peace process; and the two supporting countries, Chile and Venezuela, as well as Colombia, for their vital and important role in sponsoring the ceasefire negotiations. We reiterate our commitment to continuing to support the Colombian Government, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Mission in their endeavours to bring peace to Colombia.

Finally, I wish the Ambassador of the United Kingdom, Matthew Rycroft, every success in the new role that awaits him.

Mr. Shen Bo (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks you, Mr. President, for having convened today's meeting. We listened carefully to the briefing by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Arnault, and I welcome Vice-President Naranjo to today's meeting.

The Colombia peace process is a good example of an instance in which the Council's cooperation has made a difference in addressing hotspot regional issues. This peace process is of the utmost importance for peace and development in Colombia and of great relevance for the maintenance of regional stability. China commends the efforts made by the Colombian Government and President Santos Calderón in this connection.

The full implementation of the final Peace Agreement between the Government and the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) is at the core of the Colombian peace process. The implementation of the peace agreement is currently facing challenges that are due to complex factors. After half a century of conflict and strife in the country, healing the wounds left by war will not be an easy task. The full implementation of the agreement encompasses political, security, development and social integration aspects. It is akin to a systematic engineering project and requires sustained efforts on the part of Colombia and the international community.

There is a high degree of consensus among different sectors in Colombia and on the part of the international community that the peace process there is irreversible. China is confident that the Government and FARC will be able to overcome the current difficulties and work towards the same goal, staying the course in the peace process so as to create conditions favourable to the full implementation of the Agreement by the Colombian Government and FARC and maintain the current positive momentum.

China also hopes that the Security Council and the international community will continue to focus on and support the peace process in Colombia, respect the leadership of the Colombian Government and people of the process, and provide constructive assistance to help along the way.

China commends Special Representative of the Secretary-General Arnault and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia for the important role they have played in this connection. We hope that the Mission will continue to enhance contacts and communication with the Government and FARC and make greater efforts to enhance trust and dispel doubts.

With a view to promoting the implementation of the agreement by the Government and FARC, China also hopes that the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army) will overcome the current difficulties and reach agreement without delay on an extension of the ceasefire.

China is ready, together with other members of the Council, to continue to play its role in promoting the peace process in Colombia and to achieve comprehensive peace and stability in that country at an early date.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): Let me join others in expressing our thanks to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Arnault for his briefing on the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2017/1117).

I am pleased to welcome the Vice-President of a country that is, despite the well-known challenges, on

the cusp of making history in peacemaking. We wish him success; we need that success as an example. Colombia has indeed been the good news in the Council, and we all have been applauding the remarkable achievement made by the country in turning the page on a long-standing conflict.

As we have come to understand, and as stressed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, there are formidable challenges in terms of implementation that require patience and perseverance to achieve sustainable peace. We have always known that the road ahead would be difficult and complex, and that it would not be a cakewalk.

We certainly welcome the positive progress made over the past year, including the laying down of arms, which was successfully completed just a few months ago and represented a significant milestone in the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

However, we are conscious of the fact that there are sensitive issues that need to be handled carefully, including the reintegration of Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) combatants into civilian life; the implementation of personal and collective security and protection measures in the absence, or with an inadequate presence, of State institutions in places left by FARC combatants; and other issues highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General that might potentially create political complications.

We take note of the approval of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the backbone of the Peace Agreement, on 30 November. We are convinced that the approval of the Agreement alleviates the concerns of former combatants and facilitates their reintegration into society.

The Constitutional Court's endorsement of the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition, on 14 November, as well as FARC's registration as a legal political party and its announcement that it would participate in the 2018 presidential and congressional elections, are very significant. While we commend the continued political will being demonstrated by the Government and FARC, we understand that more needs to be done in order to accelerate the implementation of the Agreement and sustain the gains made in the first phase of the peace process.

We note that the parties are committed to addressing this challenge, and they can only be encouraged to stay the course. The Council should continue to provide all of the necessary support, and we remain fully committed to supporting the Colombian parties in the implementation of their Agreement.

On the ceasefire agreement between the Colombian Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army) ,we can only hope that things will improve for the better despite the latest setback. We know how strongly the Government is committed in this regard.

We express our appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Arnault and to United Nations personnel in Colombia for all their efforts in support of the Peace Agreement. We also reiterate our appreciation to the countries of the region and other international partners that continue to closely support and accompany the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

Finally, we take this opportunity to reaffirm our support for the full implementation of the Colombian Peace Agreement and continue to stand in solidarity with the people and the Government of Colombia in their efforts to transition to a sustainable peace.

I want to stress how critical the success of this process is, not only for the people of Colombia but for us all, particularly for those of us in parts of the world where we have the major challenge of keeping the guns silent. Colombia should continue to serve as an example. For that to happen, it is important that nothing happen to dim the hopes that have been engendered, which we had the opportunity to witness during the Security Council mission last May.

I want to conclude by taking this opportunity to express profound appreciation to Matthew for his friendship and for the notable contribution he has made to the work of the Council. As everybody knows, with Matthew one can always be sure about the position he takes, and therefore one can always count on him, as we have. I am personally indebted to him for all of that. I wish him success as he assumes a responsibility back home that is in no way less important than the responsibility he has had as the representative of his country on the Council. He will be missed very much, and I share the sentiment expressed by the representative of the United States in that regard.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to preface my remarks by extending a very warm and cordial welcome to the Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia, His Excellency Mr. Óscar Adolfo Naranjo. I would like to convey to him and to President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón my country's appreciation for the tireless efforts they have devoted to bringing about lasting peace in Colombia. I would also like to convey my gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, Mr. Jean Arnault, for his presence with us today and for his succinct briefing. We also thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and detailed report (S/2017/1117) on the situation in Colombia published on 27 December 2017.

Equatorial Guinea welcomes the successful progress in the peace process under way in Colombia among the country's various social and politicial stakeholders. That success is due to the determination exhibited both by the national authorities, led by President Santos Calderón, and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). We would also like to underscore the courage shown by the entire Colombian people in facing the situation and, in favour of peace, taking the steps to leave behind more than five long decades of conflict. We feel particularly sensitive to the situation in that brotherly country due to the historic ties that link us as a result of our common Hispanic cultural heritage.

The high-level ceasefire agreement and the Final Peace Agreement on ending the conflict and building a stable and lasting peace between the Colombian Government and FARC-EP is the best example in that the national peace process is making satisfactory progress and has undoubtedly served as a source of inspiration and positive encouragement for the peace talks begun between the Colombian Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, which has created the conditions conducive to, and exciting expectations of, the realization of comprehensive and lasting peace and stability in Colombia.

In that regard, Equatorial Guinea endorses and welcomes the unanimous adoption resolution 2381 (2017) by the Security Council on 5 October 2017 and supports the recommendations of the Secretary-General on how the United Nations can best support the Mission charged with monitoring the temporary ceasefire between the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and the Colombian Government. The resolution allows all members of the Security Council to provide the necessary support to the work of the Verification Mission in the process of monitoring the ceasefire, which undoubtedly represents a very important measure in building the necessary trust between the parties. We hope it will lead to definitive and lasting peace, which would allow that brotherly country to make the most of all its immense potential.

While significant progress has been made, significant challenges remain, such as the effective reintegration of former guerrillas and the adaptation and approval of legislative initiatives to allow for the effective reinsertion and participation of former combatants in political, economic and social life of the country. To achieve that end, a positive approach and contribution by all parties involved is crucial. The judicial, political and legislative authorities have a decisive role to play, both in tackling present challenges and in preventing them from recurring in the course of the process. In that regard, I recall the remarks of His Holiness Pope Francis on 7 September 2017 in Bogotá, during his visit to Colombia:

> "Despite obstacles, differences and varying perspectives on the way to achieve peaceful coexistence, this task summons us to persevere in the struggle to promote a culture of encounter."

The ultimate success of the peace process in Colombia will depend in large part upon all parties involved in the negotiations respecting their commitments, including those not covered by the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. We therefore appeal to the political goodwill of all parties in that regard.

I cannot conclude my statement without once again expressing our gratitude to all those components of Colombian society that have made it possible for us today to speak of peace in Colombia, while also underscoring the role of the Catholic Church and also the invaluable support of a number of countries of the subregion.

I end by expressing my thanks to our friend Matthew for his warmth and the new life he breathed into the work of the Security Council, as well as my thanks for his support to my country in its first period serving as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. We wish him the greatest of success in his future endeavours.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Kazakhstan.

I would like to begin by welcoming to the Security Council His Excellency Vice-President Óscar Naranjo of Colonbia. We would also like him to convey our best regards to President Santos Calderón, whom we met during the Security Council mission to Colombia, as well as our appreciation for his courage and commitment to the peace process. I would also like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Arnault for his comprehensive briefing and to commend the contribution made by him and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

It is more than a year since the Government of Colombia and the Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) signed a historic peace deal ending more than half a century of armed conflict. We have now entered the second year of the Colombian peace process, which is a milestone achievement — not only for the Colombian Government and the FARC-EP, but also for the entire international community. However, we still have a long way ahead, and we are all aware of the challenges they face.

As Under-Secretary-General Feltman rightly indicated during his visit to Colombia, there is a sense of growing concern about how the peace process has been evolving over the past several months. At the same time, we truly appreciate the frank assessment and acknowledgement by the Government of Colombia of the existing difficulties and its sincere and firm stand on the irreversibility of the peace process.

Yet some shortcomings in reintegration activities still persist that might jeopardize effective realization of the peace process. Both the Government and the FARC-EP have to do their best to ensure a proper reintegration process in order to prevent former combatants from being recruited by dissident groups or former rivals. In order to avoid the undermining of public confidence, it is essential to strengthen the security-development nexus, especially in former FARC-EP territories long-affected by the armed conflict.

We reiterate our firm commitment to the Colombian peace process and look forward to the overall implementation of the peace-related legislative agenda, including reforms and all other necessary constitutional amendments and provisions to address the challenges of peacebuilding.

We regret that the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) has resumed its attacks and missed the opportunity to amplify the truth. However, Kazakhstan still hopes that the Colombian Government and the ELN will ultimately find a way to extend the ceasefire. We fully support Colombia in its endeavour to ensure the complete elimination of the half-century war and move towards fostering reconciliation. The very fact that the Colombian Government and the FARC are united in their determinaiton to end the conflict and bring about peace allows us to remain optimistic that subsequent stages in the peace process have no option but to succeed. Kazakhstan absolutely supports all those efforts.

In conclusion, I join my colleagues in the Council who spoke very warmly about the professional and personal qualities of the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, Mr. Matthew Rycroft, and stated that he will be missed here. We wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

I now resume my functions as the President of the Council.

I give the floor to the Vice-President of Colombia.

Mr. Naranjo (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): After a year of implementing the agreement that ended the armed conflict with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), the Government of Colombia has come to the Security Council with the belief that that milestone in the history of peace is the best piece of news our citizens received and that our country conveyed to the world during the latter half of the previous century.

It is for that reason that we begin by thanking the United Nations and the Security Council for their effective support and dedication to peacebuilding efforts in our country, through its Special Verification Mission in the areas of reincorporation and security guarantees. We thank Special Representative Jean Arnault for his professionalism, effective work and leadership as the Head of the Mission. We would also like to thank Ambassador Matthew Rycroft for his commitment and dedication to the peace process in Colombia. With his peers present, we reiterate that we never will we forget him for his efforts in bringing about peace in Colombia.

Today, I would like my statement, in my capacity as the Vice-President of Colombia and representative of President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, to be viewed

as the manifestation of a vision brought forth by the efforts of various generations that sought peace. We are now building and ensuring such peace. As an officer of the Colombian armed forces, I witnessed at first hand the tragedies caused by a war that lasted many years. I attended the funerals of many civil servants and innocent Colombians. There were 240,000 violent deaths caused by the conflict and more than 8 million victims throughout the decades. Today I am pleased to inform the Council that the peace process was effective and allowed the lives of at least 3,000 people to be spared in the last year alone after the agreement was signed. That is without a doubt another piece of good news.

Based on an assessment of the implementation of the agreement one year after it was signed, we can state without hesitation that the peacebuilding process is progressing in structural terms and that the agreement has been an effective covenant for ending the war and silencing the guns. As the Council knows, we have been able to develop an effective process of laying down of weapons, which heralded the end of the FARC as an armed organization and its transformaton into a political party. To meet the new challenges of the post-conflict and peacebuilding era, we have established various Government institutions and rolled out mechanisms for interaction and coordination that have enabled us to respond to the challenge we face.

Over the past year, the legislative agenda of the Congress of the Republic of Colombia led to the adoption of six pieces of legislation that introduced constitutional reforms and various laws and decrees including more than 100 norms and decrees, which laid the foundation for peacebuilding in our country.

Let me now mention the progress made in the areas of reintegration and security guarantees, which are included in the Mission's mandate. With regard to reintegration, I must underscore that Colombia has more than 14 years of experience. More than 50,000 Colombians have passed through our programmes, who left criminal organizations and reintegrated into society. We can therefore safely state that our country can serve as a model in that area. That experience is the starting point for ensuring the reintegration of the FARC's former combatants. We now have 12,848 former combatants involved in the process, of whom — and this is very important — 11,362 already receive a basic monthly stipend. We have sought to provide literacy and primary and secondary education courses in the territorial areas for training and reincorporation. More than 5,000 people were involved in the first phase of the initiative — former combatants and members of local communities alike.

To facilitate reincorporation, Ecomun was established. It is the main cooperative for former members of the FARC, which is now a political party. Forty-two other cooperative organizations have been established through a special system for former combatants. We established the National Reincorporation Council and 26 territorial councils to coordinate reincorporation efforts from the local to the national level. At the same time, there has been a major change in the political sphere, with FARC elements disappearing as an armed organization and now becomig a new political party that will take part in the upcoming parliamentary elections in March. It has already decided to field a presidential candidate.

With regard to security, we think it essential to inform the Council that 2017 was the least violent year in Colombia in the past 42 years, with the lowest murder rate recorded in four decades. That is another piece of good news. Sadly, it is true that people linked to the former FARC organization, community leaders and human rights defenders have been murdered. Nonetheless, during the negotiations, in order to end the conflict, we were careful to design new institutions and mechanisms that ensure that life and personal integrity would always be protected. To protect former FARC combatants in particular, 160 protection schemes have been approved and more than 800 former combatants have been included and trained to serve jointly in inter-agency bodies alongside State staff in personal protection services.

I would like to reassure the Council that the Government shares public concerns about the murder of former FARC combatants, community leaders and human rights defenders. We do not deny the situation. We acknowledge and highlight it. However, we are taking action and hope to do so with determination and efficiency. The President himself chairs the National Commission for Security Guarantees, in which civil society, the public prosecutor's office, the office of the ombusdman and other members of the Government take part, in order to assess and take decisions on security-related issues. Such efforts have enabled us to accelerate investigations undertaken to combat impunity and ensure that those responsible are held accountable.

We believe that we must not only work on speeding up investigations, but also on the prevention of such acts. To that end, we have designed and implemented a new prevention and rapid reaction system for the regions, which, with the help of the Ombudsman's Office, seeks to ramp up a preventive capacity that will truly allow us to prevent the violent deaths of social leaders. Here before the Security Council, I can affirm that, as we have done in the past in order to combat organized crime that has emerged from drug trafficking, we will not let up in our efforts to overcome such networks.

My presence here today coincides with the strategic decision taken by my counry's President to move forward the consolidation of a secure and peaceful Colombia. Plan Victory, implemented by the military forces, and the safe communities and peace plan of the national police have just been overhauled so as to respond comprehensively in neutralizing any type of violence in the country reported by Colombians. Over the next several days beginning now, we will be deploying approximatley 80,000 soldiers and police officers whose duties will be focused on controlling territory abandoned by the FARC so that it is not taken over by any criminal entity.

Lastly, the President of Colombia wishes to acknowledge that he has received and taken due note of the first report (S/2017/1117) of United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, and, at the same time, reaffirms his resolve and full commitment to comply with the Final Peace Agreement. We are certain that the historic achievement of ending the conflict will prevail over obstacles and major challenges inherent in its implementation.

We regret and genuinely deplore recent events, but the Council must know that the Government has maintained a willingness to pursue a negotiation process with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional in order to extend the bilateral ceasefire in order to allow us to make progress, pursue dialogue and bring to fruition the Peace Agreement. Inexplicably, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional has not only rejected the good-will gestures of the Government, but it has also failed to consider the appeals of the Catholic Church, non-governmental organizations, academics and the international community to continue talks and relaunch a ceasefire that would ensure its sustainability. Nevertheless, I reaffirm before the Council that the Government will not waver in its mission to bring about peace — given that peace is the expression of the collective will that must prevail over concrete acts.

Accordingly, the events of the past few hours and minutes have led the chief Colombian negotiator to consult with the President to assess the situation, and under no circumstances will we ever abandon a goal that is of the utmost importance to our Government, which has unequivocally demonstrated to the entire world that its leader, the President of the Republic, is a champion of peace, peacemaker and peacebuilder.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.55 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8155

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8155th meeting

Wednesday, 10 January 2018, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Umarov	(Kazakhstan)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. French

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2017/1113)

Assessment by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of phase one of the reconfiguration of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2018/12)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2017/1113)

Assessment by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of phase one of the reconfiguration of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2018/12)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/1113, which contains the text of the report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, and document S/2018/12, which contains the text of the assessment by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of phase one of the reconfiguration of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the situation in Darfur.

Six months after the adoption of resolution 2363 (2017) on the two-phase reconfiguration of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), I am honoured to bring to the attention of Council members the joint assessment of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission of the Mission's phase one reconfiguration, as submitted in the joint report (S/2018/12), in line with paragraph 6 of the resolution. I shall also touch upon recent development in Darfur in the context of the latest 60-day report of the Secretary-General on UNAMID (S/2017/1113), issued on 27 December 2017.

In June last year, in acknowledgement of the overall improvement of the security situation in Darfur, the Security Council endorsed the recommendations of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission in their special report of 18 May 2017 (S/2017/437) for a two-pronged approach, with a focus on protection in the Jebel Marra area and on stabilizing the situation in other areas of Darfur. In the same context, the Security Council authorized a reduction of the Mission's uniformed and civilian personnel in two phases, including the handing-over of 11 UNAMID team sites to the Government of the Sudan, while requesting a written assessment by 1 January 2018 of the first six months of the reconfiguration. The assessment was conducted by a joint African Union-United Nations team, with representation from the United Nations and humanitarian country teams, which visited Khartoum and Darfur from 7 to 17 November 2017.

Allow me to briefly introduce the main findings of the assessment. The conflict trends indicated in the special report of 18 May 2017 continue, since, following the military victory against the rebel movements, the Government of the Sudan is firmly consolidating its control and State authority across Darfur, except for the pockets in the Jebel Marra area controlled by a fragmented and weakened Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid, with the other rebel groups having been engaged in mercenary and criminal activities in neighbouring countries. In Darfur, the deployment of the Rapid Support Forces and the execution of the weapons-collection campaign have increased the Government's capability to respond swiftly to security challenges. The developments have also created new dynamics by bringing the different groups under the authority of the Rapid Support Forces, including, recently, the border guards of Musa Hilal, and by gradually creating the conditions for new political realities.

Without major incidents overall, the disarmament campaign has been received with mixed reactions and scepticism, particularly by the communities of internally displaced persons (IDPs), while the local authorities and tribal leaders believe that it has increased security among the communities. UNAMID is engaging the authorities on reported concerns over

non-respect for the rule of law and violations of human rights associated with the campaign, while monitoring its execution in the IDP camps, including the Kalma camp. In the meantime, progress towards achieving a negotiated political settlement to the conflict remains elusive.

Thus far, the humanitarian indicators illustrate a continuing emergency situation, with 2.7 million people displaced, of whom 2.1 million across Darfur are in need of assistance, and 1.6 million people living in various camps and settlements. While no additional displacements occurred during the assessment period and some voluntary returns have taken place, including the recent repatriation of Sudanese refugees from the Central African Republic to South Darfur, the lack of security, basic services and sustainable livelihoods in the areas of return, as well as issues related to land ownership, have become major impediments to return.

Phase one of the reconfiguration of UNAMID was completed before the deadline of 31 December 2017, with 11 team sites closed and handed over to the Darfur state government by the end of October. The military component currently stands at 11,461, against an authorized strength of 11,395 at the end of phase one; the police component at 2,666, against an authorized strength of 2,888; and the number of civilian staff positions has been reduced by 558 following the conduct of a civilian staffing review. In the context of the two-pronged approach of the Operation, the mission recently formalized the concept of the Jebel Marra task force, and will activate it in the second half of January, while, on 7 January, the Government reported having allocated land for the Golo team site, although details on the actual establishment of the site are yet to be agreed. The mission is currently working on the state-specific stabilization plans in cooperation with the Darfur state Government and the United Nations country team.

During phase one of the reconfiguration, the Government of the Sudan has been very cooperative in facilitating the repatriation of contingents and the timely closure and handover of team sites. The overall operating environment for the movement of humanitarian personnel across Darfur has been reliable. However, the Mission is facing some difficulties in obtaining visas for international staff, in particular those working on human rights.

The assessment in Darfur was undertaken within a few weeks of the closure of team sites, which allowed for only a preliminary analysis of the impact of the UNAMID reconfiguration. While no serious adverse impact was noted during the field mission and the subsequent weeks, it is clear that it is too early to draw a definite conclusion with regard to the consequences of the closure of team sites for the population. In the period ahead, we will continue to keep the Council informed of any emerging issues.

The developments covered by the Secretary-General's progress report reaffirmed the trends outlined above. While the reporting period did not witness any armed clashes between Government forces and the Darfur armed movements, the initiation of the forceful stage of the weapons collection campaign across Darfur and its launching in the IDP camps constituted its key features. In addition, the start of the migration season continued to generate violence among communities, although at a lower level than in previous years. No tangible progress was noted in the Darfur political process or in the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur.

In conclusion, I would like to bring two issues to the attention of the Council. First, as the Mission moves towards the implementation of phase two of the reconfiguration, provided that the current trends continue, I recommend, for the Council's deliberation, that a review take place to consider a new mission concept with adjusted priorities in the context of the renewal of the UNAMID mandate in June. Secondly, funding for the consolidation of peacebuilding efforts in Darfur should be treated by Member States as a political issue of high priority in order to protect the investments made to date in peace and to avoid a relapse into conflict.

The President: I thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his briefing, which, as usual, has been very useful. We also thank the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General for their assessment report (S/2018/12) on phase one of the reconfiguration of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

We are very encouraged that the security situation in Darfur continues to show marked progress and that

the Government is consolidating State authority across Darfur. We commend the Government for extending the unilateral ceasefire and for the fact that there has been no fighting with one of the rebel groups since around the beginning of 2015 and with a second rebel group since the beginning of 2016. Humanitarian access has continued to improve in Darfur and the operating environment for the movement of humanitarian personnel across Darfur has been reliable and open since December 2016.

We are particularly pleased to learn that the weapons-collection campaign launched by the Government is helping to consolidate the prevailing relative peace and stability in Darfur, including its contribution to the significant decrease in intercommunal conflicts, especially given the valid concerns raised during the launch of the campaign. It is also encouraging to note that the collection process has been without incident in the internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps and that an agreement has been reached to establish a trilateral committee, with the participation of UNAMID, the Government and representatives of IDPs, to conduct the collection of weapons in Kalma camp. It is our hope that the weapons campaign will contribute to further reducing the level of armed violence and to improving the conditions necessary for the return of IDPs to their original homes.

Although we are pleased that no new displacements occurred in the reporting period, the high number of IDPs remains one of the greatest challenges to the 10 months of sustainable peace in Darfur. However, the Government has limited capacity to fully address that enormous challenge and therefore needs the support of the international community.

Of course, we are disappointed that progress towards achieving a negotiated political settlement has remained difficult so far. As the Panel of Experts on the Sudan established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) explained in its final report (see S/2017/1125), the core problem is the unrealistic expectations of the rebel groups. It is difficult to assume that the rebel groups are ready to engage with the Government in good faith or, indeed, to consider the interests of the people a priority. What their acts show is that they have been involved in criminal activities, including in Libya and South Sudan. As the report of the Secretary-General indicates, and as Under-Secretary-General Lacroix just stressed, whatever rebel activities there may be are limited to pockets of Jebel Marra and have descended to involvement in acts of banditry. That is why we are reiterating our call to the Council to put pressure on the rebel groups to participate meaningfully in the peace process or face the consequences.

We are also concerned about the slow progress of the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. As the Secretary-General has said, the Doha Document represents a comprehensive framework for a political solution, and we urge all armed groups to lay down their weapons and join it without delay. We are encouraged by the Government's expressed commitment to the Doha Document's implementation and the recent action that has been taken in that direction. It must be understood that the Government is making these efforts in spite of the difficult regional security dynamics and the hostile actions of other external actors, aimed at fomenting more trouble in the Sudan and the region by supporting some of the armed opposition groups, as is highlighted in the report of the Panel of Experts (S/2017/1125).

We are also pleased to note the successful completion of phase 1 of the drawdown and reconfiguration of UNAMID, and the Government's commendable cooperation in that regard. Furthermore, we are pleased that no serious adverse impact has been noted following the closure of team sites as part of the reconfiguration process. We believe that the situation in Darfur is conducive to proceeding to phase 2. This time, a great deal of emphasis should be placed on peacebuilding efforts, and that is the universal request being made to the assessment team — for development projects to support peace in Darfur. That will require enhancing the financial and human resources of the United Nations country team.

It will also be very important not to overlook the humanitarian challenges in the region. The report shows that the number of refugees entering Darfur from South Sudan now totals 192,826, with 89,000 of those having arrived in 2017 alone. The Sudan obviously need support for this, including considering the fact that it has also been contributing to peace and stability in the region, as can be seen from President Salva Kiir's visit to the Sudan on 1 and 2 November and President Al-Bashir's visits to Uganda on 13 and 14 October and Chad on 1 and 2 December. In that context, we support the efforts of UNAMID and the United Nations country team to develop a joint fund-raising strategy for implementing the Integrated Strategic Framework for Darfur for the period from 2017 to

2019. The international community should also provide all necessary support to the peacebuilding efforts in Darfur. We appreciate the fact that the Government has allocated land for a temporary operating base for the Jebel Marra task force in Golo. That will no doubt greatly facilitate UNAMID's anticipated traditional peacekeeping role in the Jebel Marra area.

Lastly, we support the outcome of the assessment and recommendations made by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General regarding the way forward. We look forward to the conduct of the joint review by the African Union and the United Nations, in close consultation with the Government, before the renewal of UNAMID's mandate in June.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Peru would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his report (S/2017/1113), and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for his briefing on the various aspects of the reconfiguration of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

We consider Darfur's progress towards stability a positive development. The arms-collection campaign has resulted in a decrease in violence in recent months, and we encourage the Government to continue those efforts in line with the provisions of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, backed by the necessary political support. However, we note with concern that violations of human rights continue. We would like to remind the Sudanese authorities of their responsibility to protect the civilian population, particularly women, children and internally displaced persons in vulnerable circumstances. It will be very important to strengthen the capacity of the police and the judiciary to prosecute and punish those responsible for atrocity crimes. With regard to the evaluation of the UNAMID reconfiguration and drawdown process, we would like to highlight three issues that require urgent attention.

First, the speed with which phase 1 of the process has been carried out has to some extent limited the ability to plan and implement the reconfiguration process adequately. It will be crucial to ensure that phase 2 is conducted in a more organized and coordinated way among the teams involved. Peru supports the recommendation to postpone the delivery of the Kalma base until the end of phase 2 of the reconfiguration process, so that the process can be carried out as safely and peacefully as possible. We are also concerned about the delays in establishing a temporary base in Golo. We believe that will be key to enabling UNAMID to make progress with the peacekeeping process and focus its resources and activities on sustainable development in Darfur with a view to addressing the root causes of the conflict. We consider it urgent and vital to address the problems preventing humanitarian aid from reaching its recipients. We acknowledge the fact that improvements have been made in the process of issuing visas, improvements that should also be extended to humanitarian personnel. But it will be equally important to eliminate bureaucratic obstacles to the entry of containers into the country.

In our view, sustaining peace in Darfur means achieving a permanent ceasefire and addressing the root causes of the conflict. In that regard, we welcome UNAMID and the United Nations country team's initiative in implementing the Integrated Strategic Framework for the period 2017 to 2019. Donor contributions, including from non-conventional sources and regional financial institutions, should be solicited to ensure that it is adequately implemented.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his detailed briefing on the bimonthly report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/1113), and the assessments by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General on the first phase of the reconfiguration of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

We would like to take this opportunity to highlight the positive aspects of the issue, which have been chiefly in the security sector, as we also saw during the previous reporting period. The fact that have been no clashes between the Sudanese Government and the rebel groups in Darfur for a subsequent reporting period represents significant progress. In that regard, we welcome the Government's decision to extend the unilateral ceasefire to 31 March, creating an environment that will make it possible for the Government and UNAMID to focus their efforts on consolidating peace in Darfur and on the political process, by addressing the underlying causes of the conflict, such as land-ownership issues, and promoting development in that area.

Another aspect we would like to emphasize is the progress that has been made with the weapons-collection campaign promoted by the Government. Its success is essential to improving security in local communities and building a stable and sustainable peace. We should prevent any possible disputes and foster commitment to the process on the part both of civilians and militias. This Government-initiated process aligns with UNAMID's peacebuilding efforts and needs committed support from the international community.

On the humanitarian front, it is clear that the improved security conditions have prevented any further displacement of civilians. While that is a positive, however, the situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is still worrying, and no significant improvements have been made despite the efforts of the Government, agencies and humanitarian workers. It is urgent that the international community support the development of projects that will make it possible for IDPs to obtain access to basic services and improve their quality of life. We also express our thanks for the work that is being done by the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Food Programme and other humanitarian actors.

We would highlight the fact that new cases of obstruction to humanitarian access have been reported. However, access has been provided to people in Jebel Marra, which reflects the good relationship between and the joint work done by the Government and the various relevant agencies. In addition, although the number of cases of human rights violations and other types of crimes has declined compared with the previous period, we must redouble our efforts to put an end to cases of illegal detentions and violence against women and children, in particular sexual and gender-based violence, and promote access of women to justice.

Bolivia believes that one of the main challenges facing Sudan at the moment is the revitalization of the political process. We welcome the work of the Government to promote the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur and stress that the only possible solution to the crisis in the area is a political process that will make it possible to resolve the outstanding issues between the parties, primarily disputes with regard to land ownership. Conflicts between communities, the disarmament of the civilian population and militias, and a permanent ceasefire, inter alia, are issues that must be addressed.

We believe that the differences that exist with regard to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur must be resolved, and we encourage those parties that have not yet signed on to it to engage in a consultative dialogue with the Government. We also welcome the good offices of the Special Representative, Mr. Jeremiah Mamabolo, and members of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel.

Finally, we believe that in order to make progress in development and to consolidate a stable peace in Darfur, the Sudan needs the United Nations to work together with the African Union and the international community in general. We also commend the progress that has been made in the process of reconfiguring UNAMID, and we believe that we must strengthen the capacities of the United Nations country team in order to move on to the second phase and ensure a successful drawdown of the Mission. We thank UNAMID for its efforts and dedication to peacebuilding in Darfur.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to start by expressing my gratitude to Mr. Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his presentation of the report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) (S/2017/1113). The report sheds a great deal of light on the current situation in Darfur. We noted therein some positive developments, which were made possible by the joint efforts of the United Nations, the African Union and the Sudanese Government.

We note with satisfaction the positive results of the joint efforts of the Sudanese Government, as reflected in the fact that the number of clashes between the Government and rebel groups in Darfur has dropped significantly. This improved atmosphere makes it possible to focus the efforts of all the parties on the political process, which should lead to the achievement of a lasting peace. We would also like to highlight the Government of the Sudan's commitment to promoting the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur.

Equatorial Guinea has always believed that the conflict in Darfur must be resolved through a political process that makes it possible to deal with the most controversial issues, including the issue of land ownership, conflicts between communities and the disarmament of the civilian population and militias. All the movements involved in this process must work

hard to achieve peace with the Government through a process of negotiations that is frank and inclusive. We therefore urge the Sudanese Government to continue working closely with UNAMID, which would be a way of ensuring the success of the Operation and would help the State re-establish its authority throughout the territory.

We also welcome the fact that the movement of UNAMID and humanitarian personnel has improved, which was made possible by a reduction in the level of violence. That is a very significant step forward.

We, too, urge the international community, at this very decisive moment, to strongly support the Sudan so as to consolidate the positive developments that we heard about in Mr. Lacroix's report and to help resolve the issues that require attention.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his high-quality presentation to the Council, which has helped us to understand the most recent developments in the region of the Sudan.

In our statement today, Côte d'Ivoire would like to focus on two key points: the peace process in Darfur and the status of implementation of the recommendations emanating from the report on the strategic review of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) (S/2017/437), as dealt with in the joint review of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, in particular the implementation of phase one of the reconfiguration of UNAMID.

Although my delegation welcomes the improvement in the security situation, characterized by a significant reduction in the number of clashes between the Sudanese Government and armed groups in Darfur, since the extension of the unilateral ceasefires by the protagonists and since the weapons-collection campaign, we nevertheless remain concerned at the fact that little progress has been made in the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, which remains a useful political framework to address the root causes of the conflict and to give the people of Darfur the possibility of enjoying the dividends of peace.

Côte d'Ivoire fears that the current political deadlock will bring to nought the efforts made to date to find a way out of the crisis and that we will see a return to the previous situation, which caused the mass displacements of people that we are seeing once again today.

My delegation believes that peace in Darfur must include national reconciliation, a permanent cessation of hostilities and an inclusive political dialogue. We therefore call upon all of the parties involved to involve themselves in a genuine effort to restore peace, in the interests of the well-being of the people and the stability of the entire region.

With regard to the implementation of the recommendations of the strategic review, particularly with regard to phase one of the reconfiguration of UNAMID, my delegation would like to welcome the joint assessment of the United Nations Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

My delegation would like to stress two of the points listed in paragraph 6 of resolution 2363 (2017), of 29 June 2017, with regard to the joint assessment: the progress achieved in the implementation of phase one of the reconfiguration of the hybrid force and the cooperation of the Sudanese Government with UNAMID.

With regard to the first point, my delegation welcomes the fact that phase one is functioning well. It has resulted in the closure of 11 sites and the reduction in the number of military personnel to 11,395 from 15,845 and of police officers to 2,888 from 3,403. The Ivorian delegation welcomes the fact that the Sudanese Government has allocated sites to be used in the establishment of the Jebel Marra task force, which, in our view, is a way to build capacity in UNAMID as it carries out peacebuilding activities in the Sudan.

With regard to the second point, in a spirit of constructive cooperation, my delegation would like to invite the Government of the Sudan to allow UNAMID's troops to move freely, in accordance with its mandate, and facilitate the administrative procedures required to conduct its activities.

Mr. Almunayekh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I welcome the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Lacroix, to the Security Council and thank him for his detailed briefing on the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/1113) on phase one of the reconfiguration of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). In addition, I welcome the encouraging developments outlined in the report, in particular with regard to the reduction in the number of clashes and levels of violence

during the reporting period. We believe that phase one is vital to achieving stability in Darfur.

We welcome the fact that the Government of the Sudan has accepted the conclusions of the joint assessment and allocated land for the establishment of a temporary operating base in Golo. Furthermore, we welcome the efforts of the Sudanese Government to stabilize Darfur, in particular with regard to the return of refugees, the collection of weapons and the national dialogue. We support the national dialogue process and the efforts of the African Union's High-level Implementation Panel. We welcome the efforts of UNAMID, in cooperation with local forces in Darfur, to facilitate the transition to the post-conflict peacebuilding phase. We reiterate the importance of supporting the Sudan in its efforts.

The positive role played by friends of the Sudan in implementing development projects in Darfur facilitates the voluntary return of displaced persons and helps to provide them with a decent life. In that regard, I reiterate the importance of reaching a political solution in Darfur and of ensuring that all stakeholders participate in a peaceful political process.

It is important to end arms proliferation in Darfur. I welcome the cooperation between UNAMID and the Government of the Sudan with regard to the collection of weapons in certain refugee camps. In addition, I reiterate the importance of respecting the sovereignty, unity and independence of the Sudan. I note the attacks perpetrated by militia groups in the Sudan that destabilize the country and the wider region. We reiterate our support for the Government of the Sudan in its efforts to overcome challenges and meet the demands of the United Nations.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Kazakhstan.

We join others in expressing our deep appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his comprehensive briefing.

My delegation supports the conclusions of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/1113) on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), as well as the joint assessment of the progress of UNAMID's reconfiguration, and would like to offer the following observations.

Kazakhstan is encouraged by the continuing progress made on the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur, as well as by enhanced cooperation among the Sudanese Government, the United Nations and the African Union (AU). The most recent proof of such cooperation is the Government's consent to establish the operating base in Golo. We also welcome the decision of the Government of the Sudan to extend the unilateral ceasefire until the end of March. We hope that the other parties will also undertake the efforts necessary to invigorate an inclusive political process led by the AU High-level Implementation Panel. Gradually, we must move towards fulfilling the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur.

Kazakhstan is also pleased to note that no adverse effects have been observed during phase one of UNAMID's reconfiguration. We believe that, during its mandate renewal in June, UNAMID's duties should be adjusted towards prioritizing its peacebuilding capacities. Peacebuilding efforts should focus on the implementation of the UNAMID United Nations country team's Integrated Strategic Framework for Darfur for 2017-2019, which identifies the priorities for sustainable peace in Darfur. At the same time, the Government of the Sudan needs international support, including expertise and financial assistance to resolve the plight of internally displaced persons and succeed in the arms collection campaign. That effort should also be accompanied by investment in development projects.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month.

I also welcome the new non-permanent members of the Council and wish them every success in their efforts. I assure them of our cooperation in the Security Council with regard to the situation in the Sudan by sharing all information with them.

I thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/1113), which is before the Council. I thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Lacroix, for his comprehensive briefing, from which we greatly benefited. I would like also like to greet from afar the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Commission itself for their efforts, and thank them for their ongoing support to the Sudan.

We have considered the report before the Council on the implementation of the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. It is a periodic report that is submitted every 60 days as an assessment of the situation in Darfur. The Council has perhaps noted that such reports seem to contain nothing new. We believe that the Secretariat examines only minor incidents and misdemeanors documented in police stations. We believe this practice reveals shortcomings in preparing the reports submitted by the Secretary-General to the Council.

I would refer to paragraphs in the report that outline the situation and the conflict in Darfur, listing minor incidents that could occur even in the safest and most secure cities. It appears that the authors of the report have prepared it based on incidents reported to police departments. This fully reaffirms what we have been repeating and confirming, which is even confirmed in those reports, to the effect that the situation in Darfur is now normal, safe and just like many other areas and cities throughout the world.

In that regard, I recall that we warned against that situation when UNAMID's mandate was renewed in June 2017 (see S/PV.7989), saying that shortening the length of the reporting periods could result in weakening the reports submitted to the Council. We said that it would be preferable to increase it or maintain a 90-day reporting period.

The adoption of resolution 2363 (2017), which calls for the gradual withdrawal of UNAMID and a reconfiguration of the Mission, has brought Darfur to a new phase of peacebuilding and the consolidation of achievements in the areas of peace, security and stability in all areas of the state, with the exception of a small pocket in Jebel Marra. The resolution has validated the calls that have been made by the Sudanese Government since 2015 for the Mission to adapt to developments in Darfur that changed the nature of the conflict that was fought there.

In that regard, all that remains of the crisis in Darfur are its consequences for development and displaced persons, which are directly linked to the peacebuilding agenda. We see it as high time that the United Nations and the international community work to support the Sudanese Government in addressing those challenges once and for all. Similarly, we are grateful for the tireless efforts of Qatar, the sponsor of the Doha peace process, and other friendly States in providing assistance in rebuilding and the voluntary return to villages and making basic services available, which has encouraged displaced persons to return to their homes and normal lives.

Furthermore, a number of representatives in the Council have spoken about the Doha agreement. The essence of the agreement has brought us to this stage because 85 per cent of it has now been implemented. I should also like to draw the Council's attention to the fact that the Implementation Follow-up Commission for Peace in Darfur was established under the Doha agreement and includes the five permanent members of the Security Council. It meets in Khartoum and Doha every six months, in rotation, to assess and analyse developments in Darfur. We call on Council members to consult its reports so as to see the implementation of the Doha agreement, which was overseen by the League of Arab States, the United Nations, the African Union and other peace partners.

With all due respect, I therefore have to say that I cannot accept two statements made by Council members, calling for the need for a peace process. We believe that the Doha Document offers the constitutional foundation for the peace operation. To substantiate that, I need only cite the changes in size that the Mission has undergone on the ground and the provisions of resolution 2363 (2017), adopted on 29 June last year.

The Sudanese Government, supported by the will of the people of Darfur, is working to consolidate and sustain peace by implementing projects that assist in this regard, the most important of which is the weapons-collection campaign, because the reasons for keeping weapons no longer exist. Overall, the report indicates that the campaign has had outstanding results despite a lack of resources and capacities, but the real and sincere willingness to see it through has contributed to its success and completion. As we have said in previous statements, weapons collection is an absolute prerequisite for sustaining peace and security. The Sudanese Government has therefore spared no effort to ensure the completion of the campaign and collect weapons from civilians so that members of the armed forces are the only ones to carry them and to police all those who fail to respect laws that apply to bearing and acquiring weapons.

We reaffirm that the success of that campaign depends on firm respect for the law without exception — a precept that we have followed consistently. Furthermore,

we stress the importance of cooperation with UNAMID and of meetings and consultations with the Joint African Union-United Nations Special Representative for Darfur. It is worth noting that the Vice President of the Sudan, the resident representative of the African Union and the United Nations will meet in Darfur shortly. The Vice President of the Sudan has said that the Sudan is ready to fully leave the process to and allow UNAMID to address it if the Mission is committed to carrying out the weapons-collection campaign. This is where we can be flexible with regard to that issue, but we must address weapons collection because the proliferation of arms in any conflict zone will result in the persistence of challenges and emergency special operations that will be launched automatically.

My country welcomes the steps taken by UNAMID in the context of implementing the recommendations contained in resolution 2363 (2017). In that regard, 11 sites have been closed during the first phase of reconfiguration. We look forward to the start of the second phase of the Mission's downsizing, pursuant to resolution 2363 (2017). Accordingly, I reaffirm that the Sudanese Government will continue to cooperate with UNAMID towards the fulfilment of its mandate, including the closure of the remaining sites during the second phase. We agree that such cooperation is very important. Various reports, including the one before us, have highlighted that cooperation, in particular with regard to authorizing customs clearance for containers, visas, freedom of movement, and granting access to the Mission and humanitarian partners.

Furthermore, we have also approved the Mission's request to establish a temporary operating base in the Golo region. In that spirit, the Sudanese Government has allocated a 5,620-square metre parcel of land in Jebel Marra for the temporary operating base in Golo. We call on UNAMID and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to reconsider the construction of a ground route connecting Zalingei, Golo and Rokiro, which would be of great benefit to the population of that region. The construction of the military airport in Golo will not have the same beneficial impact as would such a ground route, which would permit access to the region and provide services to Darfur. The Governor of Darfur has submitted our plans to UNAMID.

In conclusion, we welcome the ongoing tireless and complementary efforts aimed at completing the peace process, and we welcome once again the dawn of peace, which will bring development that will end the conflict once and for all. The delegation of my country thanks UNAMID for its work in various areas. We also thank police- and troop-contributing countries and reiterate our willingness to cooperate with all regional and international partners in connection with UNAMID so that it can finally leave the Sudan.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8156

Security Council

Seventy-third year

(Provisional)

8156th meeting

Thursday, 11 January 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Umarov	(Kazakhstan)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco

Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2017/1104)

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18-00851 (E)

Accessible document

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2017/1104)

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/1104, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

I now give the floor to Mr. Chambas.

Mr. Chambas: It is my honour to be here in the Council today to introduce the Secretary-General's report on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2017/1104).

Despite continuous progress in West Africa and the Sahel, notably regarding democratic and peaceful political transitions, the security situation in the region remains a matter of grave concern. In Mali, terrorists launched a complex attack on bases of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in Kidal, resulting in the death of one peacekeeper. Three more Malian soldiers were killed recently by a landmine in Mopti region, and another Malian soldier was killed by terrorists in Niono. Two separate attacks on security posts were also registered in Burkina Faso near the Malian border. The attacks in Mali as well as within the Mali-Niger-Burkina Faso tri-border area are mainly attributed to Al-Qaida-affiliated groups and the Islamic State in Greater Sahara.

In the Niger, the increasing number of security incidents has compelled the Government to dedicate 17 per cent of public expenditure in 2018 to the security sector, compared with 15 per cent in 2017. This has, however, triggered demonstrations in the capital of the Niger given the expected detrimental effects on the delivery of social services.

Following a notable decline in the number of Boko Haram attacks in the first half of the year, there has been an uptick in the number of incidents since September last year, with a peak of 143 civilian casualties alone in November 2017. The use of children as suicide bombers by Boko Haram increased five-fold compared with 2016, to reach 135 cases in 2017. While 700 people abducted by Boko Haram have recently escaped captivity, the group continues to kidnap innocent persons, as shown by the recent disappearance of 31 loggers in Gamboru near the Cameroon border. Overall, more than 2 million displaced persons are still desperately waiting for an end to the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin.

The comprehensive response of the region to address the Boko Haram threat must be supported by the international community. I commend the successful efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force and welcome the conference on the resuscitation of Lake Chad to be hosted by Nigeria next month.

In the Sahel, the Group of Five (G-5 Sahel) has made significant progress in the operationalization of its Joint Force, including by establishing its military command structure and a Force headquarters in Sevaré, and conducting its first military operation with French troops in late October 2017. In line with resolution 2391 (2017), consultations are currently ongoing regarding the conclusion of a technical agreement among the United Nations, the European Union and the G-5 Sahel States on the provision of operational and logistical support to the Joint Force through MINUSMA.

On 8 December, at a meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the European Union and representatives of the G-5 Sahel in Brussels, I underscored that the security response needs to be complemented by measures to tackle governance challenges as well as to boost economic development and the resilience of the Sahelian population, as articulated in the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel.

The past six months have seen substantive progress in the efforts to reinvigorate the strategy, notably through an extensive mapping of strategy-related activities and the presentation of a proposal in that context to strengthen the resilience of the Sahel population during the third annual Climate Finance

Day, to be held on 11 December in Paris. A support plan for the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel will now be shared with national, regional and international partners so as to harmonize approaches and to canvass for effective support for the Sahel in line with national and regional priorities, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Meanwhile, the exponential spread of intercommunal and farmer-herder conflicts, which have claimed hundreds of lives in the recent past, must also be cause for worry. It is a ticking time-bomb that unattended could escalate beyond the community level.

Last December, during the Policy Committee of the West Africa Coast Initiative, member countries committed to reinforcing the fight against organized crime in line with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) regional action plan to address illicit drug trafficking, transnational organized crime and drug abuse. Also, migration has become one of the most lucrative activities for criminal networks across West Africa and the Sahel. In this regard, stemming human trafficking must continue to be a top priority in 2018, as recently underscored by Secretary-General Guterres.

In line with resolution 2282 (2016), the United Nations continues to pioneer the sustaining peace approach in the Gambia and Burkina Faso to ensure lasting peace and the consolidation of these young democracies. Strong support by the international community for Burkina Faso's emergency plan will enable it to withstand threats to its peace and security. The Gambia has just concluded the first phase of its security-sector reform, and democratic consolidation is progressing with generous financial support on the part of international partners. However, more attention still needs to be paid to the challenges facing the two countries in the areas of security-sector reform, national reconciliation and the justice sector. The United Nations continues to coordinate closely with the African Union, ECOWAS, the European Union and other partners in this regard.

Respect for human rights and the rule of law is a fundamental basis for advancing peace, security and development. Thus I particularly welcome Burkina Faso's new law on human rights defenders and the law recently passed by the Gambia's National Assembly to establish a national human rights commission. The establishment of a judicial commission in Nigeria to review the armed forces' compliance with international human rights standards and the start of judicial proceedings against Boko Haram suspects in Nigeria also need to be commended.

Regarding the demarcation of the Cameroon-Nigeria border, the good-neighbourly relationship between the two countries continues to increase prospects for its completion.

The trajectory of successful democratic elections in West Africa continues. Notably, on 10 October and 26 December the people of Liberia came out in large numbers to peacefully elect a new President. I applaud the Liberian people and their leaders for their recourse to exclusively legal means to settle all electorally related disputes; this has served to further strengthen its existing democratic institutions. The deployment of former President Obasanjo of Nigeria, whom I accompanied in his capacity as a member of the Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation, following the 26 December presidential run-off, contributed to the gracious concession statement by Vice-President Boakai and the magnanimous gesture of President-elect George Weah, and demonstrated once more the efficacy of preventive diplomacy.

Further attention now needs to be paid to the forthcoming elections in Sierra Leone and Guinea. In Togo, opposition parties continue with their protests. The lack of consensus on the implementation of constitutional reforms in the country could threaten the holding of the legislative and local elections scheduled to be held this year. I continue my close collaboration with President Nana Akufo-Addo of Ghana and President Alpha Condé of Guinea, Chairperson of the African Union, to facilitate a resolution of the impasse between the Government and the opposition, in consonance with the Togolese Constitution, regional democratic best practices and the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.

As we pay tribute to the outgoing President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who is leaving office after 12 years of leadership and service to her country and the wider region, in particular during her term as the Chair of the Economic Community of West African States, we must increase our efforts to promote the participation of women in decision-making and leadership and ensure that the region's youth are solidly placed at the centre of development policies.

Let me finally underscore that UNOWAS remains strongly committed to continuing to support efforts for the consolidation of peace and stability in West Africa and the Sahel in line with its mandate and very much appreciates the constant support it enjoys from the Security Council.

The President: I thank Mr. Chambas for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Côte d'Ivoire notes with great interest the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/1104), His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, and reiterates its support for his tireless efforts to promote sustainable peace and security throughout the world in general, and in West Africa and the Sahel in particular.

My country commends his Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, on his outstanding briefing, which apprised the Security Council of the progress made since the report of the Secretary-General was published in June 2017. He also cited the many ongoing humanitarian and security challenges that continue to weaken the building blocks of peace and security in a region already sorely tested by several socioeconomic issues. The gains made in the area of political governance spark hope, because they are part and parcel of an irreversible process of deep-seated change under way in our society. The Council must continue to support efforts at dialogue and peaceful dispute resolution in some States of the region.

In spite of the overall progress made in West Africa, my country remains concerned about the ongoing threats to terrorism and violent extremism in the region, which are linked to transnational organized crime and trafficking of all kinds, in particular trafficking in migrants, illegal drugs, weapons and persons. The phenomenon is exacerbated by poverty and unemployment, in particular among young people in areas where it is difficult for the State to exercise its authority. The quest for sustainable solutions to such challenges leaves us no other option but to work together to adopt a holistic, coordinated approach that would enable is to reduce threats to peace and security. To that end, the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire believes that action must be taken at three levels.

First, action must be taken at the political and strategic level to ensure greater consistency among mechanisms in order to strengthen security, political governance and democracy in the West Africa and the Sahel. In that regard, we think it essential to fully exploit the comparative advantages of regional organizations, in particular the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), whose successive interventions in Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Burkina Faso and The Gambia have demonstrated the full extent of their capabilities in the areas of conflict prevention and conflict management in the countries concerned. Following the recent holding of peaceful presidential elections and the subsequent democratic transfer of power in Liberia, one of Côte d'Ivoire's neighbours, we are hopeful that the country has turned away from political and military crises, turned over a new leaf and is now writing a new story that is full of hope. It would enable this brotherly country to continue to build peace and remain on the path of socioeconomic development.

In that regard, we would like to congratulate Liberia's political actors and its people on setting a good example in Africa in general and in West Africa in particular. Now more than ever, it is up to the international community, in the light of the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Liberia, which is scheduled for March, to continue to support the efforts of the Liberian Government and the country's civil society organizations with a view to building on the gains of the State's transition to democracy and bringing about sustainable peace and reconciliation that is indispensable to the country's socioeconomic development.

The implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel through an innovative multisectoral approach, and greater consistency among regional initiatives is also vital and should do more to strengthen security and enhance the resilience of States and people of the region to crises. However, it must be underscored that if the Strategy is to succeed, all partners, including countries of the region and international donors, must honour their commitments.

Secondly, at the operational level, it is important to continue efforts aimed at forging synergies between the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) Joint Force in their efforts to combat organized terrorist groups

that are now equipped with increasingly powerful and sophisticated tools. In that regard, I welcome the adoption on 8 December 2017 of resolution 2391 (2017), which outlines MINUSMA's logistical and operational support for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force in an effort to enhance its logistical and operational capabilities, as an essential factor in achieving that objective.

By the same token, and in line with the recommendations of the fifty-second ordinary session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the ECOWAS, held in Abuja on 15 December 2017, Côte d'Ivoire calls for the implementation of predictable and sustainable funding mechanisms for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. It hopes that the commitments made during the donor conferences in Berlin and Paris are honoured so as to raise the funding required to ensure that the force becomes operational in March.

My country also welcomes efforts made by countries participating in the Multinational Joint Task Force, which have curbed the operations and geographical spread of Boko Haram. However, the information we have regarding the withdrawal of a major country's contingent is a source of concern.

Thirdly, we need to envision a more inclusive socioeconomic development of the countries in West Africa and the Sahel, especially in rural areas where poverty-stricken and unemployed youth are easy recruitment prey for combatants. Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the launch of the Alliance for the Sahel, which aims to bring together all the initiatives promoting development in the Sahel region.

To conclude, I recall that there must be synergy in the actions taken by the countries and regional institutions of West Africa and the Sahel and the United Nations with a view to ensuring lasting peace and inclusive development. Such synergy will help us to address the root causes of conflict in the region. In any case, my delegation remains convinced that despite the regional context, which seems to be particularly difficult, UNOWAS continues to be an important tool for conflict prevention in West Africa and the Sahel. In that regard and in full cooperation with the other members of the Security Council, Côte d'Ivoire will lend its full support to UNOWAS for the achievement of the common goals shared by the Council, namely, the maintenance of peace and security and promoting development in West Africa and the Sahel.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Chambas, for his briefing today and recognize and acknowledge the very important work he does, of which today he listed the very important positive developments in the region. I know and I would like to pay tribute to the fact that his discreet, delicate hand has played a part in supporting many of those developments. So, I thank him again for that.

The United Nations regional offices have an important role to play in delivering on the ambition of the Secretary-General, and supported by the Council, to put prevention at the heart of our work. As we have heard, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) continues to carry out a number of important preventive functions, in particular though the use of its good offices. UNOWAS plays a critical role by contributing to the strategic and integrated analysis of the opportunities, risks and challenges faced by national and local authorities in their efforts to sustain peace. I think Mr. Chambas has presented many of those today. I would like to say that we strongly support that work and would like to see it replicated in other regions.

A conflict prevented rarely makes the front pages, and success stories often go unnoticed. However, while political tensions continue in some countries of West Africa and the Sahel, it is important that we acknowledge positive developments and reforms in the region, such as in Liberia, The Gambia and Burkina Faso, as we have heard today. The Council and the United Nations should seize opportunities to support the region in consolidating democratic practices and sustaining inclusive economic development and growth. UNOWAS also has an important role to play in that regard.

I would like to take just one minute to mention Liberia again, as my colleague from Côte d'Ivoire did. I think it is very important that we commend the country for the peaceful, transparent, free and fair election process that has just been concluded. We acknowledge the important supportive role played by the region and the United Nations, including by former President Obasanjo of Nigeria and again Special Representative Chambas. We look forward to continuing our support to Liberia as it moves to a new chapter of its development, including through the Peacebuilding Commission.

As we ask UNOWAS to do more — including in support of the transitions from peacekeeping missions to non-mission settings in Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire and in support of regional efforts to combat terrorism, and so on — we must also ensure that adequate resources are available to it to carry out those tasks.

Many of the challenges facing the countries of the region — terrorism, transnational crime, humanitarian crises, increasing competition for scarce resources, including as a result of climate change — show no respect for national borders. Only sustained and holistic approaches that take into account the root causes of conflict and instability in the region, and the linkages between them can lead to long-term solutions. The ongoing cooperation between UNOWAS and other regional organizations provides the potential for the development of such approaches. The decision taken at the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Summit in December that ECOWAS and UNOWAS would work together on the role of changing transhumance patterns as they relate to a potential conflict between herders and farmers and conflict dynamics across the region is a good example of such cooperation.

In conclusion, I once again want to thank the Special Representative for his briefing today and assure him of our continued very strong support.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, my delegation appreciates the convening of this meeting and the briefing delivered by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Chambas, on the situation in West Africa and the Sahel. Peru especially welcomes the work of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) as a sui generis tool for effective action, especially in relation to prevention. Its regional and holistic vision gives it a special ability to take action, together with its flexibility and adaptability to the various challenges of the current subregional scene.

At the same time, the Office is the appropriate platform for coordinating regional and subregional efforts and alliances that address the existing complex cross-border threats to peace and security in the area, while promoting both the full exercise of human rights and a gender perspective in the prevention and peace consolidation processes. Given the Office's fundamental role recognized by various international actors, we would like to underscore three successful areas for action that reveal its important potential.

First, in the area of preventive diplomacy, Peru believes that UNOWAS stands out particularly in its capacity to be an active agent of conflict prevention. Its monitoring and early warning functions have helped to ease tensions and offer peaceful political solutions in various States. Of special note is the development of mediation and good offices, which have prevented the emergence and aggravation of political crises. Those capacities must be strengthened and enhanced.

Secondly, in the area of promoting development and institutional strengthening, it is precisely the ability of UNOWAS to see the big picture that has allowed it to do outstanding work in coordinating with the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and various regional organizations in the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, for example.

Peru believes that such a multidimensional approach can contribute to the achievement of the common objectives of creating inclusive governance in the region and establishing programmes aimed at promoting development. One commitment of UNOWAS that we deem relevant is the strengthening of political institutions to make them more efficient and transparent. Similarly, the recent agreement between UNOWAS and the United Nations Office for Central Africa to work together and increase cooperation and assistance in the Lake Chad basin is noteworthy. It is a shared vision that is vital and of the utmost urgency that seeks to respond to the difficult living conditions in the region.

Thirdly, in the area of fighting against terrorism and violent extremism, in the aforementioned articulating framework with various African organizations, UNOWAS has demonstrated efficiency in contributing to a cross-cutting approach to address the serious threat posed by the actions of Boko Haram. Peru would like to highlight the reintegration programmes that have been developed with people associated with that terrorist group, as well as actions aimed at supporting the fight against impunity by strengthening the judicial institutions responsible for prosecuting the group's members. The contribution that UNOWAS is able to make to addressing transnational organized crime, which in many cases provides financial support

for such terrorist activities, will also be important to those efforts.

In conclusion, we recognize the advantages of having this Office in the subregion, but we also emphasize the importance of ensuring that it can rely on resources that are adequate to ensuring its ability to continue its important work. We also welcome complementary initiatives, such as the Alliance for the Sahel, launched in July 2017 and led by the European Union, with the participation of the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, for his briefing. We appreciate his performance and the efforts he makes on a daily basis.

The work of special political missions is an important tool for developing strategies for building and sustaining peace. In the case of UNOWAS, the work it is doing pursuant to its mandate and, of course, in the areas of preventive diplomacy, good governance, the protection of human rights, good offices, political mediation and facilitation of dialogue is vital, and we want to highlight and support its efforts to promote the active participation of women in political processes related to peace and security.

We would also like to highlight the mission's excellent coordination with regional and subregional organizations such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, which enables it to encourage the leadership of the countries of West Africa and the Sahel to work for political, institutional and security-sector reform. In that regard, we would like to single out the extraordinary electoral process held in Liberia towards the end of last year in a peaceful, credible and stable environment, and to congratulate the Liberian people on demonstrating their commitment to democracy through such a significant event. We stress this case because it shows how fundamental it is to have reconciliation processes based on inclusive political dialogue, consensus and rapprochement among the parties, which promote the strengthening of lasting and sustainable peace.

We welcome the progress made in the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. We believe firmly that the contribution and commitment of the countries of the Sahel, regional and subregional organizations and the cooperating countries will be critical to that implementation, with a view to achieving long-term results that will enable us to meet security challenges, strengthen political and socioeconomic stability and promote comprehensive development. The Strategy should assist countries like Mali, which remains in serious crisis thanks to the policies of regime change in Libya, and identify the root causes of instability and conflict there. In that context, we reiterate our firm rejection of interventionist, interfering policies that destabilize and undermine international peace and security.

We also encourage the States members of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to continue working for the definitive deployment and operationalization of their forces. The cooperation of the United Nations, through the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, and the African Union will be key, and we therefore encourage the conclusion of the technical agreement between the United Nations, the European Union and the G-5 Sahel in the framework of resolution 2391 (2017).

Despite those significant efforts, we are concerned about the continuing complex situation in some countries of the region, whose peoples are facing enormous challenges, mainly in the area of security, which bring with them problems such as cross-border crime, human trafficking, the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in drugs and arms — just some of the consequences of conflict that have a negative impact on the civilian population and development in the region — and to which we must add the scourge of terrorism. Bolivia emphatically condemns all forms of violent and criminal activity that harm civilian populations, particularly terrorism, a completely unjustifiable type of aggression and one of the most serious threats to international peace and security in all of its forms and manifestations. We demand the full implementation of resolution 2349 (2017) in the fight against terrorist groups, particularly Boko Haram and Da'esh.

The presence of Boko Haram persists in the subregion, with severe consequences. According to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/1104), between June and September 2017, there were 156

attacks attributed to that terrorist group, of which 100 were perpetrated in Nigeria and five in the Niger, claiming almost 300 fatalities, most of them women, not to mention the shocking kidnapping of girls and children for evil purposes. In that regard, we commend the coordinated efforts of UNOWAS, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Multinational Joint Task Force to develop a strategy for combating Boko Haram. The members of the Security Council and of the United Nations as a whole should give every support possible in order to help them eliminate terrorism and work to bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice so that they can be duly investigated, prosecuted and punished.

We should not fail to mention the worrying humanitarian situation facing the population of the subregion, in which 5 million people have been displaced — 2 million of them in the Lake Chad basin region — in addition to the enormous figure of 30 million who are at risk of food insecurity, 4 million of whom are children suffering from malnutrition. We encourage the international community in general to continue to contribute technical support and economic and humanitarian cooperation and to make its best efforts to help the most vulnerable populations.

Lastly, Bolivia reaffirms its full support for the regional and subregional architecture for resolving conflict in Africa. We consider it essential to ensure that an African vision is reflected in the implementation of every initiative aimed at bringing genuine peace to the continent. We encourage the Governments of West Africa and the Sahel to continue the process of stabilizing the region while strictly respecting States' sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands): Like others before me, I would like to warmly thank Special Representative Chambas for making a difference in West Africa. His good offices, whether in the Gambia, Liberia or Togo, have helped to ease tensions and stabilize countries and the region. Today he noted several positive developments, but considerable challenges remain. Sustained international support in promoting stability is needed, and we see the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) as an essential enabler of such support. Today I would like to to focus on three important aspects of the added value that UNOWAS brings to security and stability in the region — the three Cs of conflict prevention, cross-border cooperation and coordination.

The first C is that of conflict prevention. The Security Council has set it as a priority for UNOWAS, and rightly. A year after a turbulent change of power, the Gambia is on the right track. In Togo, the Special Representative has collaborated with the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States to encourage national stakeholders to engage in a much-needed dialogue on constitutional reform. In Liberia, UNOWAS played an important role in ensuring that the elections were peaceful. Sierra Leone will be the next test case for West Africa's encouraging track record on democracy.

The multi-pronged approach of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) constitutes the ultimate prevention tool. In the Lake Chad region, for example, the effects of water scarcity and climate change are some of the root causes of conflict. Achieving the SDGs, and particularly SDG 6, would secure access to safe water and sanitation. Providing creative solutions to assist the farmers on the Niger border with the water they need to farm and provide for their livelihood will go a long way in addressing the fragility of the region. But as long as we are not there yet, early warning, rapid reaction, the use of good offices and peacebuilding — such as what is offered by UNOWAS — will remain of critical importance in these and other country situations. We therefore encourage the Special Representative to continue his important early warning activities and would support, for instance, the organization of joint early warning missions with the Economic Community of West African States.

Secondly, I would like to emphasize the importance of the C of cross-border security cooperation, whether it is about countering terrorism, organized crime or trafficking and illegal migration flows. Also there, the Lake Chad region is a case in point. The countries of the region have established the Multinational Joint Task Force to tackle the challenges of Boko Haram. However, the threat continues to loom large and the resource challenge is difficult to overcome. I commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's efforts to support diplomatic, security and humanitarian responses to the violence perpetrated against civilians by Boko Haram. The affected countries must be in the driving seat, however.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands welcomes the reaffirmation by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union of the need for a comprehensive approach and calls for a regionally coordinated strategy

for the promotion of peace, security and development. Initiatives by the region that promote such a holistic approach deserve the Council's support. We would welcome special attention and separate reporting, including early warning analyses, on the situation of the Lake Chad basin in the next report of the Secretary-General.

That brings me to the third C of coordination. In West Africa and the Sahel, we will not achieve much if we do not effectively coordinate, both with our partners and within the United Nations system. UNOWAS embodies this very idea. I would note, for example, its role in advancing the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. It reduces duplications, it links the field with Headquarters and it brings stakeholders together. That is exactly what needs to be done as actors and initiatives multiply.

Another example is the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). It can be a success only if the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali provides indispensable operational and logistical support; if key financial contributions are provided through a well-coordinated international mechanism; if the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights can properly support the human rights compliance framework of the Force; and if the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime enables strengthened cooperation between the Force, police and the criminal justice sector. Those are just a few of the necessary conditions.

In conclusion, conflict prevention, regional cooperation and enhanced coordination are critical conditions to addressing the root causes of instability and bringing about peaceful and inclusive development. Through its scope and its mission, UNOWAS is a key enabler in West Africa and one that can early on direct the Council's attention to emerging challenges for the region's stability. Let us make the best possible use of it and make sure it has the financial means to do so.

Let me reiterate our gratitude to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Chambas, personally, and UNOWAS, generally, for their sustained efforts and leadership.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a source of great satisfaction to the delegation of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea to have Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), with us today.

In congratulating and thanking Mr. Chambas for the comprehensive and detailed semi-annual report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/1104), which he has just introduced to us, I should like in particular to express our appreciation for and recognition of the excellent work being carried out by the Special Representative in the region of West Africa and the Sahel, in spite of the numerous challenges and threats that continue to be posed in that region by terrorists groups and violent extremists, as well as by transnational organized crime, especially human and drug trafficking, and the persistence of asymmetrical attacks perpetrated by armed groups in the northern and central parts of Mali. The report of the Secretary-General also points to the humanitarian crisis caused by the resurgence of Boko Haram attacks as of last June, causing more than 2.5 million people to be displaced in the Lake Chad basin area, as well as the severe food crisis suffered by some 500,000 people in that region.

Given these situations, as the briefing we have just heard has illustrated, it is very urgent that the international community decisively support the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, established by Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali Mauritania and the Niger. This support must also be extended to the Multinational Joint Task Force, made up of Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria. They should be provided with the means necessary to effectively combat these terrorist groups.

The negative and destabilizing impact of the phenomenon of climate change in several parts of the region, especially for animal husbandry and agricultural production, is also worth mentioning. It is raising serious tensions in some countries of the region as a consequence of the desertification that leads to the emigration and migration of ranchers, which is a source of tension and insecurity within these countries.

Despite the alarming picture we have just painted, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea greatly values the quality work that UNOWAS has been doing in the midst of these challenges. Its stellar work has led to successive renewals of its mandate, trust in its capacity for analysis, early warning, and the mobilization of State and non-State agents in the region in an effort to consolidate democratic processes and ward off threats to national peace and stability. In that regard, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea welcomes and

encourages the spirit of the Praia Declaration on Elections and Stability in West Africa, which is the cornerstone of the UNOWAS mandate.

We express our satisfaction with the positive developments taking place in the region, despite the ongoing threats and challenges, such as economic growth throughout the region; progress in the reform processes under way, especially in the security sectors in The Gambia and Burkina Faso; and the fortunate development and unfolding of presidential elections that we have just seen in Liberia. In line with these positive developments, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea calls on the international community in general and on UNOWAS in particular to take an interest in and support Guinea Bissau so that the current prevailing political situation in that beautiful country, which has considerable resources, can be successfully overcome and a definitive resolution can be reached through inclusive dialogue with the country's political actors.

I conclude by once again pointing out the terrorist threats being faced not only by countries of West Africa and the Sahel, but also in Central Africa, other regions of Africa and the rest of the world. Such is the case of mercenary terrorist groups made up of people and uncontrolled elements from several countries of the subregion who infiltrated the Republic of Equatorial Guinea during the last week of December with the aim of carrying out terrorist attacks and destabilizing the sitting Government. This situation demands vigilance and control of groups that sow insecurity and instability in several countries, on the part of the international community and the United Nations.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): We are very pleased to see Special Representative of the Secretary-General Chambas and we want to thank him for his comprehensive briefing on the situation on the situation in West Africa, the Sahel region and the Lake Chad basin, as well as the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) over the past six months. We very much appreciate the great contribution that Mr. Chambas has been making in discharging his very heavy responsibility with regard to these key regions of Africa. Sweden, the Netherlands and others have recognized the contribution of Mr. Chambas, and we share their view.

We take note of the overall developments and trends in these regions, as well as the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. We support the continued role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his good offices in efforts aimed at sustaining peace in the region, in collaboration with regional and international partners, through the promotion of inclusive national political dialogue, constitutional and democratic reforms, and transparent and peaceful electoral processes. In such efforts, we must always keep in mind that the collaboration among the United Nations, the African Union and subregional organizations like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is critical, as was amply demonstrated when it ensured a peaceful and safe transition in Gambia, in which Special Representative of the Secretary-General Chambas played a key role.

As I have concluded my introductory remarks, I would now like to make a few observations focusing on some of the most important political, security and humanitarian issues highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/1104). With regard to political and governance trends, we welcome the holding of peaceful presidential and legislative elections in Liberia, marking an important milestone in the country's effort to build sustainable democracy. As we celebrate that event and achievement, however, we cannot — as was stressed by the representative of Côte d'Ivoire a while ago — be oblivious of the great need the country has for the effective cooperation and support of the international community to ensure the sustainability of its democratic institutions. Not only are these institutions not built in a day, but they also need to be underpinned by progress in the economic and social sectors in order to address the needs of society.

In contrast to this, the political tension in Togo in relation to the amendment of the country's Constitution is a cause for concern. We support the efforts of regional leaders in trying to assist national stakeholders in arriving at a peaceful resolution to the political crisis. Here it is critical that care is taken so that the relative peace the country has had is not taken for granted. That is why all sectors of society have the responsibility to contribute to ensure that change is achieved peacefully and without allowing a slide to the unknown.

Turning to the security dynamics of the wider region, it is clear that it continues to face multiple and complex security challenges, including the threats of terrorism and violent extremism, drug trafficking and other transnational organized crime. All of these have been elucidated by Mr. Chambas. The visit by the African Union Peace and Security Council to the Lake

Chad basin in July and the holding of the first regional stabilization conference for the Lake Chad basin region in November last year were indeed important developments. However, we express our concern over the withdrawal of Chadian troops from the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Niger and its impact on the Force's response effort, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report. The circumstances surrounding those events will have to be looked at seriously with a view to addressing factors that might have given rise to them. The contribution of Chad cannot be taken lightly. There is no doubt that its absence will have implications.

On the other hand, the Security Council's visit to the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) region in October; the adoption of resolution 2359 (2017) and resolution 2391 (2017) on the G-5 Sahel Joint Force; and the high-level meeting held in Paris to mobilize support for the Force are encouraging developments. We could not agree more with the Secretary-General on the need to complement the security and military response — whether in the Sahel or the Lake Chad basin regions — with development interventions and on the need to address the root causes of conflict to prevent tensions and violence, to tackle poverty and exclusion, to strengthen the resilience of institutions and communities and to build peaceful and inclusive societies. There is no doubt that widespread food insecurity, forced displacement, climate change, chronic vulnerability and susceptibility to epidemics continue to affect people across the wider region, as we witnessed first hand during our visit to both the Sahel and the Lake Chad basin region last year.

In this context, we believe that accelerating the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel is key to addressing that challenge. Although the humanitarian response was further scaled up in 2017, the humanitarian challenge remains enormous; hence the need for enhanced and sustained engagement and support on the part of the international community. The continued cooperation and partnership of the Governments of the region, the United Nations, the African Union, ECOWAS, the G-5 Sahel, the Mano River Union, the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, as well as others, remain indispensable in tackling the multiple and complex challenges faced by countries of the region and promoting peace and stability. We commend the role of UNOWAS and its continued efforts, in cooperation and partnership with all of those important stakeholders, in fulfilling its mandate.

Finally, we look forward to constructively engaging in the discussion on the draft presidential statement to be proposed by Côte d'Ivoire, which has assumrf the penholdership of this dossier from Senegal.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Chambas for his insightful briefing on the semi-annual report of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and the recent developments in West Africa and the Sahel. I would like to sum up by saying that we appreciate the important role that Mr. Chambas and UNOWAS are playing in conflict prevention throughout the vast region, and that cooperation with regional and subregional actors is extremely vital if we are to have an effective impact. Such collaborative efforts have yielded the latest positive political and economic developments that we have witnessed in West Africa.

In that vein, we call on UNOWAS to continue its work on strengthening post-electoral stability and paying close attention to the upcoming elections across the region. The work of UNOWAS will now become even more challenging with the closure of both the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations Mission in Liberia, especially in the light of the increasing threat of terrorism and violent extremism in West Africa and the Sahel, with linkages to transnational organized crime. We are deeply concerned by the food insecurity and forced displacement among civilians caused by violence related to terrorist activities.

Kazakhstan fully supports regional initiatives to address these threats through the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force and the Multinational Joint Task Force, and commends international partners for mobilizing financial support for these initiatives, as well as for the provision of humanitarian aid for the affected population. We believe that the military approach and humanitarian assistance should also be implemented with development efforts in an integrated, complex and well-coordinated manner, reinforced with long-term sustainable funding. We, therefore, stress the importance of recalibrating the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and developing an integrated approach for the Lake Chad basin region.

To that end, we recommend a coordinated modus operandi on the part of all United Nations agencies and programmes concerned in order to increase the effectiveness of assistance provided by the United Nations on the ground, ensuring greater transparency in its adminstration, including anti-corruption measures and a more effective use of shrinking development and humanitarian aid towards a harmonized United Nations approach in Africa and its subregions.

Kazakhstan will continue to work together with the other Council members and key actors to find a solution in order to achieve lasting peace in West Africa and the Sahel region.

I now resume my functions as the President of the Council.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.8157

Security Council

Distr.: General
16 January 2018

Original: English

Official communiqué of the 8157th (closed) meeting of the Security Council

Held in private at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 16 January 2018, at 10 a.m.

In accordance with rule 55 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the following communiqué was issued through the Secretary-General in place of a verbatim record:

"On 16 January 2018, the Security Council, pursuant to annex II, sections A and B of resolution 1353 (2001), held its 8157th meeting in private with the troop- and police-contributing countries to the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus.

"The President invited Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, to participate in the meeting in accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

"The Security Council and the troop- and police-contributing countries heard a briefing by Ms. Spehar.

"Members of the Council, Ms. Spehar and representatives of participating contributing countries had an exchange of views."

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United Nations S/PV.8158

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8158th meeting

Wednesday, 17 January 2018, 9.30 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Umarov	(Kazakhstan)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Lie Cheng
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Sweden	Mr. Lundkvist
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley

Agenda

Security Council mission

Briefing by Security Council mission to Afghanistan (12 to 15 January 2018)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

The meeting was called to order at 9.35 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council mission

Briefing by Security Council mission to Afghanistan (12 to 15 January 2018)

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by the lead of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan from 12 to 15 January, namely, Kazakhstan.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Kazakhstan.

To begin with, I would like to thank, on behalf of us all, the Government of Afghanistan, as well as the Special Representative of the the Secretary-General, Mr. Yamamoto, and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for their full support and assistance during the preparations for and actual visit to Afghanistan.

I also wish to thank all Security Council members who accompanied me on that very quick but very rich visit to Kabul. We managed to talk with more than 120 people during 15 meetings in the span of one and a half days. I thank them for keeping up with the fast pace.

During the visit to Kabul, the delegation met with the President, the Chief Executive of Afghanistan and other senior Afghan officials, including the National Security Advisor, the Chairman of the High Peace Council, and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Interior, Agriculture, Economy, Energy and Water, and Trade and Commerce, among others. We also met with members of Parliament, women's non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, representatives of political parties and the electoral management bodies, as well as the leadership of UNAMA and NATO's Resolute Support Mission.

The lightning visit was an opportunity for Security Council members to gain a first-hand understanding of the country's needs and priorities, and to show solidarity with the people and the Government of Afghanistan. As Council members know, this was the first Security Council visit since 2010. It was important for the Security Council to reiterate its support for continued efforts to establish peace, stability and progress in Afghanistan. In essence, a number of challenges that were apparent during the Council's last visit persist, but new challenges and new opportunities have arisen in the meantime. Allow me to make a few main preliminary observations. A full report of the mission is being prepared and will be released with further details.

A first observation is that persisting insecurity continues to be the main obstacle to stabilization efforts. The security situation remains highly volatile. The mission noted with concern the increasing number of casualties as terrorist groups, including newcomers, are adopting increasingly violent tactics. One worrying trend is the presence and activity of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP) in the East and North of the country. Members of this group have intensified attacks on Shia populations and their places of worship, exposing the potential for deepening sectarian and ethnic tensions in the country.

To this are added the challenges posed by the return of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) from Syria and Iraq who are regrouping in Afghanistan. There are concerns about the potential use of the territory of Afghanistan to destabilize countries of the region. In that regard, interlocutors from the Afghan Government stressed the need to increase regional cooperation in fighting and preventing terrorism and countering the movement of FTFs.

Our interlocutors aiso stressed the linkages between violent extremism, well-organized transnational terrorist groups and criminal networks related to drug production and trafficking and the exploitation of natural resources. When war is funded by the narcotics trade, insecurity has the potential to negatively impact stability in the region. But insecurity is also impacting domestic politics, which was identified as one of the greatest challenges to the conduct of elections. In turn, the main obstacle to peace, according to a number of interlocutors within the Government and Parliament, is the existence of safe havens and sanctuaries for the Taliban abroad. The Government reiterated its readiness to engage constructively with neighbouring countries to curb terrorism and negotiate.

Secondly, more tangible results are needed as the peace process seems to be making little progress. The visit came ahead of the Kabul process meeting scheduled for February, at which the Government is expected to present its strategy for reaching a settlement

with the armed opposition. There was unanimity that the conflict had to end and that it would take more than a purely military solution. Only comprehensive efforts would defeat the armed opposition. There is no military solution in Afghanistan in the absence of a political process.

The mission was briefed about the structure and work of the High Peace Council and its plans for 2017 to 2020. Building on the positive experience of the 2016 peace agreement with Hizb-i Islami, led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the High Peace Council plans to in initiate talks with the Taliban. Yet, some interlocutors were not too optimistic, claiming that the Taliban had taken no significant steps towards establishing a peace process, despite the overtures of the Government. At the same time, working with the Taliban as a fragmented movement and not as a political party complicates prospects for constructive dialogue. Government officials and parliamentarians underlined the importance of an inclusive Afghan-led and owned peace process to long-term stability and prosperity.

The third observation is that the peace process is being pursued in tandem with efforts to advance inclusive and transparent governance, elections and reforms. Members of the Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission briefed the delegation on the preparations for the upcoming parliamentary and district council elections in 2018, including the development of an improved voter registry. They outlined measures to address the lack of trust in the electoral management bodies by convening regular meetings with political parties and civil society, and stressed their commitment to organizing transparent elections this year. The need for donor and Government support was noted, as was the challenging security environment.

Council members reiterated the need to hold elections this year that are transparent, timely, inclusive and impartial so as to ensure the credibility of the Government, rebuild the people's trust in their institutions, and prevent further destabilization. While plans for elections are ongoing, the National Unity Government also continues to prioritize its reform agenda, with an emphasis on anti-corruption measures, the rule of law and security sector reforms. At the same time, a number of political groups expressed growing concerns about factionalism within the Government, which has created political tensions. They noted the need to restore constructive dialogue between political forces.

Visiting Council members further heard about the enduring socioeconomic challenges that are undermining progress in governance. These include especially the lack of education among the population, the 400,000 young people who join an already stretched labour market every year, and the 39 per cent of the population that live below the poverty line. Government officials reiterated the need to intensify development efforts in order to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals for the population.

The mission was further briefed on progress and challenges with regard to the human rights situation in the country. The Chair of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission focused in particular on the rights of children, protection issues and civilian casualties. The First Lady further discussed the empowerment of women with mission members.

Fourthly, international assistance remains essential to peace and reconciliation. The Kabul process foresees a transition to greater Afghan responsibility and ownership in both the security and the civilian areas, but that does not mean that Afghanistan does not need more support from the international community. In most of the meetings, Security Council members heard about the importance of continuing support to Afghanistan, be it by extending support to counterterrorism through cooperation on borders, data-sharing and capacity-building, or through development assistance to the reconstruction process, including to the region. Afghanistan, they heard, should lead these processes and play the central role in coordinating aid. In this regard, President Ghani reiterated his request for increased on-budget assistance and the implementation of the one United Nations process so as to ensure coherence among United Nations organizations. Others mentioned the need for donor support to be better coordinated in order to reach those in need.

The Government also reiterated its support for various regional processes that strengthen prospects for an Afghan-owned peace process. References were made to a variety of bilateral, trilateral or regional formats and strategies, such as the new United States strategy on South and Central Asia, which was widely welcomed, as were such forums as the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process. President Ghani stressed the importance of Security Council unity and consensus

on Afghanistan. Together with high-level Cabinet members, he expressed appreciation for the support of the Security Council, and especially of Kazakhstan, for keeping Afghanistan on the agenda.

Allow me to make a final observation. Peace and stability can be intensified through economic integration and connectivity with the region. While the Afghan Government emphasized the importance of development assistance in promoting Afghanistan's stability, discussions revealed a preference for a new paradigm based not just on aid but especially on increasing investment opportunities for trade, infrastructure, energy exchanges, market solutions and connectivity. President Ghani and ministers emphasized the investment possibilities of Afghanistan and how the interdependence of markets and transportation roads between countries could create incentives for peace and development in the region.

In this vision, economic development and greater regional cooperation are important factors in achieving security in Afghanistan. President Ghani emphasized his country's assets, such as geographic location, human capital and national resources, which can facilitate the integration of Afghanistan into regional processes. In turn, regional initiatives would contribute to long-term stability in Afghanistan. Cabinet members spoke about the potential of several projects, ranging from the One Belt One Road initiative to the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline and the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project, as well as plans for a fibre-optics corridor to China. They also counted on the rapid development of railway corridors from Central Asian countries, China and Iran to South Asia through the territory of Afghanistan, as well as the development of the ports of Gwadar and Chabahar to provide the landlocked countries of Central Asia with access to warm waters.

Strong cooperation among neighbours is critical to promoting stability and prosperity in and around Afghanistan. This is the model of economic integration and stabilization that any subregion can use for the prevention of conflicts and the restoration of peace.

At this point, I would like to take this opportunity to mention that this message is precisely the subject of a ministerial debate that the delegation of Kazakhstan has scheduled for Friday, 19 January, to be chaired by the Foreign Minister.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

On behalf of the Council, I should like to express appreciation to all the members of the Security Council and the Secretariat who participated in the mission for the manner in which they discharged their important responsibilities.

The meeting rose at 9.50 a.m.